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Adventures in Two Worlds

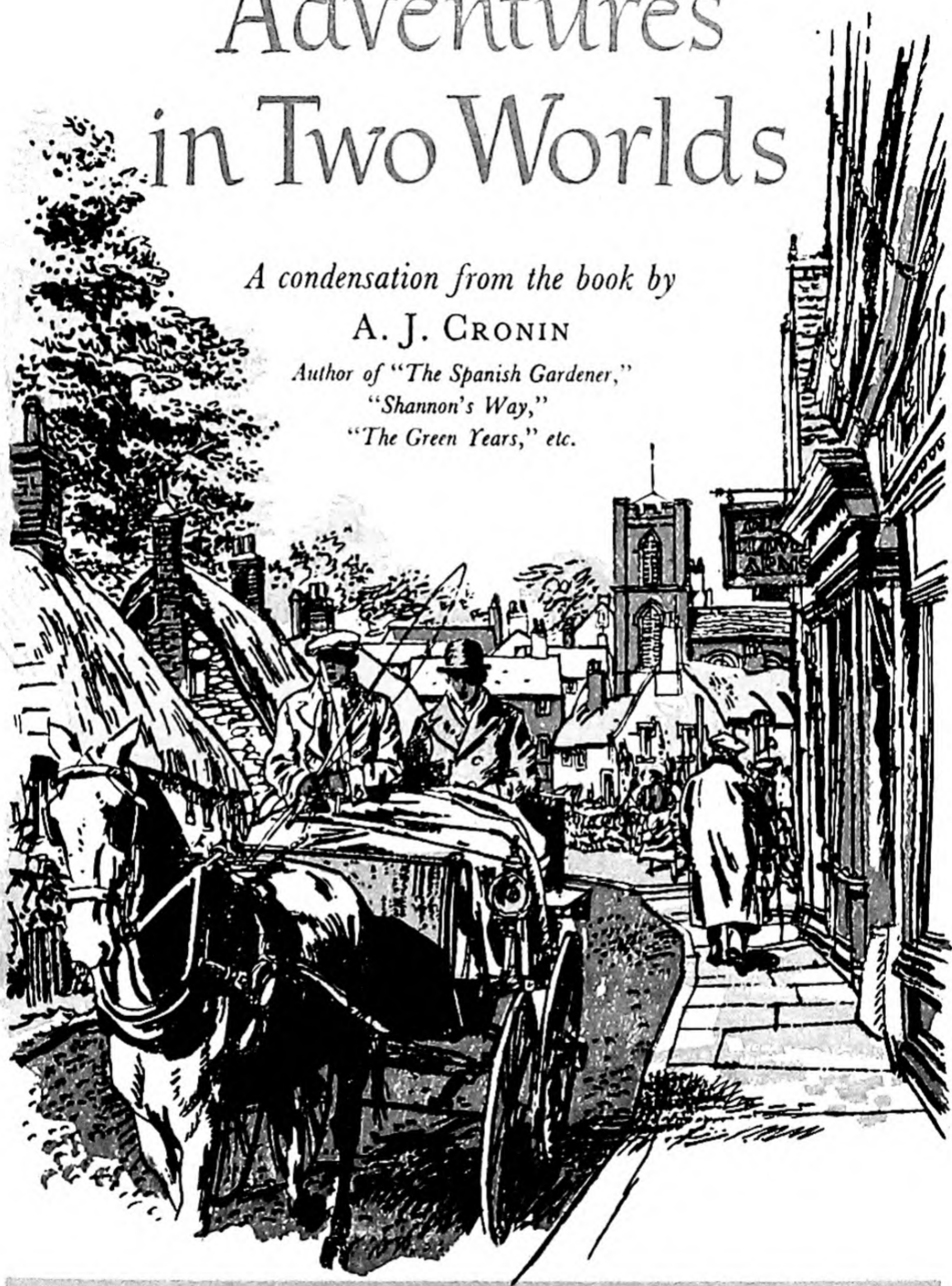
A condensation from the book by

A. J. CRONIN

Author of "The Spanish Gardener,"

"Shannon's Way,"

"The Green Years," etc.



"Adventures in Two Worlds" is published by Victor Gollancz, London.

TO A GENERATION of readers who have delighted in such outstanding novels as *Hatter's Castle*, *The Citadel*, and *The Keys of the Kingdom*, A. J. Cronin, the author, is well known. Less familiar, however, is the story of young A. J. Cronin, M.D., who rose from the obscure and exhausting labours of a country doctor's assistant to a prosperous London practice. This selection from *Adventures in Two Worlds*, Dr. Cronin's autobiography, is a fascinating account of these early years among the hardy (and often perverse) crofters of his native Scotland.

From medical school onwards the likeable young doctor met setback and success alike with unbounded enthusiasm. Whether operating on a dying child under primitive conditions, or defying a county medical officer in the face of a dangerous epidemic, Dr. Cronin displays his own special blend of courage, good humour and sympathetic understanding. These qualities, plus his refreshing capacity for wry self-criticism, give his lively record its wide and heart-warming appeal.

CHAPTER 1



WHEN I awakened that April morning in my attic bedroom, my head still cloudy from late hours of study, I felt constrained, reluctantly, to review my financial position. Thanks to the gratuity which I had received on my demobilization from the Navy three months before, the fees for my medical classes were paid up until the end of the year. The gold watch and chain I had inherited from my father, once again judiciously pawned, had provided me with the requisite instruments and second-hand textbooks. In an academic sense I was strictly solvent.

But, alas, the other side of the ledger was less satisfactory. For the past month I had been subsisting on an occasional tea-room snack. I was, moreover, two weeks behind with my room rent, while my total assets—I counted the few coins again—were precisely three shillings and fivepence. Viewed from the rosier aspect, it seemed scarcely an adequate sum on which to feed and clothe myself for the next eight months. Something must be done . . . and quickly.

Suddenly I burst out laughing, wildly, hilariously, rolling about on the lumpy mattress like a colt in a meadow. What did it matter? I was young, healthy, filled with that irrepressible spirit only to be found in a ruddy, towheaded Scot whose veins were infused with a dash of Irish red blood corpuscles. I would work, work, work. I would live on air, sleep in the park, sing in the streets, do anything and everything, to enable me to take my doctor's degree. The war, thank God, was over—there would never be another! And spring was here, glorious spring, touching

even this smoky old city of Glasgow with its tender tints and sudden shafts of radiance. And—this above all—was I not immeasurably, hopelessly and utterly unsuitably in love?

She was a slender, brown-eyed young woman of eighteen, with soft russet hair and sun-warmed complexion, also studying medicine at the University of Glasgow. I had come upon her some weeks before, in the pathology department, dissecting an endocarditic heart with grave application. On looking up from her work she had noticed me, and at the blinding moment the seeds of an unreasoning affection were sown. My first remark was breath-taking in its fatuity. I said, "Isn't it foggy today?" But I learned that her name was Mary.

We began to go out together. On Saturdays we escaped from the dreary city to nearby woods and hills, travelling through the suburbs by tramcar, then walking many miles across the moors, wind-burned and carefree.

In our serious moments we realized how impossible was our relationship. Temperamentally and practically we were the last two people in the world to consider, even remotely, the business of matrimony. She was quiet and reserved, brought up a strict Nonconformist and still, presumably, treasuring ardent hopes of converting the natives of the Congo. I was both happy-go-lucky and fiercely ambitious, and religion exercised me but little.

Our various friends had been kind enough to point out our mutual unsuitability, and from time to time we palely pledged ourselves to common sense, then parted, heroically, forever. But no sooner had we done so than, next morning, we came together by a force stronger than Newton's law of gravity and called Heaven to witness that we would never give each other up.

I jumped up and dressed quickly, regretting the necessity which made me wear my old naval uniform—on my return from service I had found the moths in possession of my sole civilian suit. Still, why not carry through with it in style? I set my peaked cap at an angle, picked up my textbooks and ran downstairs.

Unluckily, my landlady lay in wait for me, guarding the front door with broom and bucket.

"Good morning, Mrs. Grant."

She did not respond to my greeting, but continued to regard me with her accusing eye.

"Did you cook a herring in your room last night?"

"Well . . . as a matter of . . ."

"The smell went all through the house. My Indian gentleman was fair upset. And you were wasting my gas."

"I didn't use much gas, Mrs. Grant. In fact"—I forced a jovial laugh—"I ate the thing half raw."

She was not amused, but shook her head in melancholy disapproval. "I've nothing against you, lad, you back from the war and all. But you're away behind with your rent. If you cannot pay . . . you'll have to go."

I clenched my fist and banged it down hard on the well-worn cover of Osler's *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*.

"Mrs. Grant," I assured her, "I swear by Hippocrates, I'll pay you. Something is going to turn up for me. And soon!"

Outside, the breeze was soft and fresh. Upon the hill above, the low outline of the University lay with a massive, brooding air against the morning sky, as though burdened by the weight of its five hundred years. How many Scottish country boys had come to these grey cloisters, bringing with them, in the early days, a sack of meal to make the porridge that would sustain them through months of study. How many of these ambitious lads, or perhaps how few, had won through in the end.

The thought galvanized me: at all costs I must succeed. The ten years of unbelievable hardship which had followed upon the death of my father had implanted in my breast a dominant passion for success. Nothing can exceed the longing of a poor youth, beaten down by circumstances, to rise above misfortune. Upon the heart of such a one is blazoned the motto: "Conquer or die." With every pulse beat I seemed to hear, throbbing in my

ears, the words "get on, get on, get on . . . to riches, high position, fame."

This morning, in the main surgical clinic of the University the excision of a cerebral tumour was to be performed—a special treat which I had no wish to miss—but beyond that, my hopes were centred upon a plan which I meant to put into execution as soon as the operation was over.

Practically the only chance for a student to support himself lay in securing an appointment as "dresser" or "houseman" to one of the Infirmary surgeons, a position which, though unpaid, entitled the fortunate incumbent to free board and lodging at the hospital. Now, I had been privately advised that the dresser to my surgery professor, Sir William Macewen, was presently to be promoted to the position of registrar. I felt that I stood well enough with Macewen to ask him for the position.

Already, in the operating theatre, most of the class filled the circular tiers of benches that rose to the white-glassed roof. As I squeezed into the seat my friend Chisholm had reserved for me in the front row, the patient, a middle-aged woman already under the anæsthetic, was wheeled in.

The expectant buzz that filled the theatre ceased as the professor entered with calm dignity and a look of purpose. At this time Sir William Macewen was past seventy, yet his tall spare figure, erect as a lance, his regular, clean-cut features and handsome profile, conveyed a sense of youthful indomitable vigour. For more than three decades he had been acclaimed as the finest brain surgeon in Europe. We students—a thoroughly hardened and disrespectful lot—loved and revered him among ourselves as "Billee," repeated with affection the legends that had grown around his name.

He was already gowned for the operation and when he turned towards the class his voice was soft yet incisive, his manner courteous, a model of politeness.

"Gentlemen, we have today an interesting case which we be-

lieve exhibits unmistakably the symptoms of intracranial glioma."

He paused, and his eye came to rest upon me.

"What are these symptoms?"

I answered, "Intense headache, vomiting without apparent cause, unrelated to the taking of food, and extreme vertigo."

"Continue."

"There is usually marked optic neuritis with choked disk. The relative degree of neuritis is a reliable guide to the side on which the tumour is situated."

"And if this tumour were situated in the cerebellum?"

"The speech would be slow and jerky, the head retracted. The patient would tend to fall towards the side opposite the tumour. Unilateral paralysis would occur."

"The prognosis?"

"The outlook is grave. Tumours of the base of the brain, though usually circumscribed, are difficult to reach. Death may occur from sudden hæmorrhage, or pressure on the vital centres."

"Admirable. I congratulate you."

With an effort, I maintained my air of studious detachment. Above all, at this moment, I had wished to impress Billee with my earnestness and efficiency. I felt that in offering me this opportunity Fortune could not have been kinder to me.

Like an artist defining the outline of a great picture, Macewen made the first incision. Swiftly he reflected the scalp, exposed the shining table of the skull. Then the whir of the trephine filled the room as he began to cut away a circle of bone as large as a good-sized saucer. The work was hard, for he did not use an electric drill. Macewen disdained modern appliances, relying entirely upon the simplest equipment and his own superb skill. Once, when called as an expert witness in a high court of law, he was asked by the presiding judge if he boiled his instruments. "My Lord," Billee replied, holding out his hands, small and delicate as a woman's, "how could I boil these?"

Now he had laid aside the trephine and with a retractor lifted

out the disk of bone. When it was done, and the pink membranes of the brain were revealed, frail and delicately veined as a butterfly's wing, a low murmur, almost a sigh, broke from the class. There, under the bright beam of the professor's frontal mirror, ringed by forceps, was the tumour.

And now Macewen, slowly and deliberately, began to dissect out the growth from the complex tracts and convolutions with which it was entwined and which, if severed, would cause the patient's instant death. What miracles of skill and knowledge, what judgment and intuition, what imperturbable courage were displayed in this technique! Watching, fascinated, as he touched the chords of life, I longed with all my heart to achieve something of the mastery which had brought him to such pre-eminence. Ah, yes, that was the battle cry . . . get on, get on, get on!

At last, it was done—with unbelievable dexterity. The scalp was stitched up and, although there seemed little sign of shock, a saline administered. Then Macewen tied the final suture.

"Thank you, gentlemen. That is all for this morning. In three days' time it may be necessary to drain accumulated fluid. Otherwise we look for an uneventful recovery."

The patient, her head swathed in a great turban of bandages, was wheeled out by the house surgeon and two nurses. The class began to leave the theatre, not with the usual shuffling of boots and babble of tongues, but silently, as though overwhelmed. I let the others get away, remaining seated, in the pretence of making notes, in reality gathering my forces for the effort I meant to make. Macewen, attended by the sister, showing no signs of fatigue or strain, was quietly washing up. Presently the sister left him—he was alone.

I took a deep quick breath and went forward.

"Excuse me, sir. May I speak to you a moment?"

He turned, wiping his hands on the stiffly laundered towel.

"Certainly. . . . We are always prepared to listen to the young."

His tone, the indulgence in his gaze, gave me confidence. After

all, I had done brilliantly in the examinations. In the wards my answers to his questions had seemed to interest him, and more than once my more daring flights of fancy had made him smile. All that I sought was the lowest position on his staff. Taking courage, I asked him for it.

For a moment he observed me.

“Why do you wish to be my dresser?”

In all sincerity I answered:

“I want to specialize in surgery.”

Again there was a silence, a long silence. Then gently, yet firmly, he shook his head.

“No. I have already made the appointment.”

His sharp eye remained bent upon me kindly, yet with that unerring judgment that never failed him.

“In medicine, or some other field, I believe that you may make your mark. But of one thing I am sure. You will never be a surgeon.”

CHAPTER 2

LOCHLEA ASYLUM: WANTED: *a clinical clerk. Board and lodging provided at the institution. Honorarium 100 guineas. Candidate appointed will be permitted to attend classes at the University.*

Two anxious and depressing weeks had passed since my rejection by Macewen when this notice, pinned on the board in the Students' Union, caught and held my desperate eye. Lest any of my needy friends should forestall me, I tore down Gilmore Hill, and boarded a green tramcar—one of the sedate and splendid vehicles which, in those days, bore the citizens of Glasgow immense distances for a single penny.

The asylum was dismayingly imposing—a great castellated mansion, set in well-tended gardens, surrounded by meadows and orchards, the whole domain encircled by a high stone wall.

I was admitted at the gate lodge and conducted up the long beech avenue by an attendant who brought me, finally, through an arched doorway and a vestibule, adorned by marble statuary, to the office of the superintendent.

Dr. Gavinton, acknowledged as one of the leading alienists of his time, was a tall, spare, iron-grey man, gaunt and sallow-featured, with a quiet, rather baffling aloofness in his manner. Conscious of my deficiencies, sadly shaken in my self-esteem, I steeled myself for a painful interrogation. To my surprise, he repeated my name, mildly, then remarked:

"Are you related to the youngster who captained the eleven in the Scottish Shield three years ago?"

"Well, sir," I stammered, "as a matter of fact I . . ."

He nodded, his severity broken by a human and friendly smile.

"I saw the game. You played well. If the ground had been less muddy you might easily have won. Sit down. You'll find that chair reasonably comfortable."

I took a long breath, scarcely daring to believe in my good fortune—that this should be my reward for that grim defeat which had reduced me in the dressing-room to bitter tears. Yet it was so. Frank Gavinton was a football enthusiast, and for half an hour we discussed football with the intimacy of those who know and love the game. Then, abruptly, he stood up, held out his hand.

"Report here tomorrow at nine o'clock. I know that you'll be punctual. Oh, by the way." He called me back. "We pay in advance here. You'd better have this . . . your first quarter's stipend."

Nothing could have been more supremely opportune than this appointment. With the cheque for twenty-five guineas which Dr. Gavinton handed me I settled my indebtedness to Mrs. Grant and got my watch out of pawn. My new quarters, a comfortable sitting-room, with easy chairs and a fireplace, communicating with a snug, red-carpeted bedroom and bath, were, by contrast with the

wretched "digs" I had quitted, palatial. My diet was also greatly improved. Breakfast now consisted of cereal and cream—thick and fresh from the home farm—an inexhaustible platter of crisp bacon and eggs, fragrant coffee, fresh rolls and fruit. Lunch, supper and tea—the latter brought to my sitting-room every day at four o'clock—were equally bounteous. Add to this the privilege of dropping in at any hour to the great basement kitchen for a snack, and it becomes possible to imagine the change in circumstances and outlook for a famished youth who for weeks had been keeping body and soul together on an odd stale bun and an occasional mug of tea.

In the forenoon I was free to pursue my medical education at the University. For the rest, my duties in the "clinic" at Lochlea lacked neither interest nor variety. All the dispensing was under my charge, the preparation of stock solutions of potassium, sodium and ammonium bromide, of chloral hydrate, paraldehyde and many other drugs which were widely used as sedatives. I undertook the bacteriological work and microscopic examinations of pathological specimens. I also had the rather odd duty of feeding those patients who refused to eat, an operation which demanded the passing of a stomach tube, a recondite art in which I soon became extremely proficient. In addition, I kept the case records and made the evening round of the galleries when one or other of the doctors had the day off. Most of all, at Dr. Gavinton's request, since he set a high therapeutic value on this line of treatment, I was expected to mingle with our patients in a social way, to organize their games, play tennis, cricket and handball with them, take part in the concerts and dances that were regularly held for their benefit and entertainment.

Lochlea was an advanced institution, one of the best in Scotland, and although it supported the usual quota of incurables, it received many "breakdown" cases, people thrown out of gear by the stress and strain of life. To heal and rehabilitate these patients, to see them go forth, fit to resume their daily avocations and take

their part in the battle of life—this was the main objective at Lochlea. It was in many ways a thrilling work. But there was danger in it, too.

Of all the inmates of Lochlea, the one to whom I had become most attached was George Blair. Known to everyone as Geordie, this young man had a history which, made more moving by his open and engaging disposition, particularly aroused my sympathy. Five years before he had killed his cousin—had, indeed, strangled him to death. Yet the circumstances of the crime seemed, to a certain extent, to exonerate the culprit. When we talked the matter over together—this process of self-revelation was always encouraged—Geordie confessed to me that the murdered youth had insulted his sister; had, indeed, tried physically to force his attentions upon her. It was this outrage that had temporarily unbalanced Blair: a fact which, with such an upright young fellow, was quite understandable. Certainly the verdict of the court had been "Guilty, while of unsound mind." Thus Geordie, sentenced to detention, found himself removed to Lochlea, where he must spend the rest of his days.

This burden of lifelong punishment, heavy and unjust though it seemed to me, had been accepted manfully by Blair, a fact which prejudiced me more strongly in his favour. No one in the place was more cheerful or energetic. He sang at the concerts in a fine baritone voice, led the church choir every Sunday. At the monthly assemblies he appeared in a dress kilt, was up for every dance, led the grand chain, was tremendous in the eight-some reels. Although somewhat short and thickset, he was endowed with a remarkable physique and took enthusiastic part in all the games organized at Lochlea. It was this, in the first place, which brought us together. Geordie and I had many rattling exchanges at tennis. Often on Saturday forenoon when I was free we took out a ball and punted it to each other in the recreation ground. He was such a likeable fellow, so gay and virile—so obliging, too, going out of his way to perform many thought-

ful personal services for me—that I became extremely fond of him.

Indeed, I went so far as to bring his case before the superintendent. After the day's work, Gavinton was fond of a game of billiards and he often asked me to his house, where he had an excellent table. One evening when we were so engaged, I said to him: "It's very hard, sir, that Blair should be condemned to spend the rest of his life at Lochlea."

"Indeed." He chalked his cue. "Do you think so badly, then, of our little place here?"

"Oh, no, sir. It's . . . it's extremely pleasant in many ways. But after all . . . it's shut off from the world by a high stone wall."

"That wall serves a fairly useful purpose."

"Of course, sir. But surely not for Blair. He's such a decent chap. And he's had a rotten deal. Don't you think some sort of appeal could be made to the authorities?"

There was a silence during which Dr. Gavinton, stroking his upper lip with a characteristic gesture, gave me an odd look. Then he smiled faintly and, bending to take his shot, remarked: "My dear fellow, I think our friend Blair will do very well at Lochlea."

Of course, that closed the discussion. But I was not satisfied. I went out of my way to make things as pleasant as possible for my friend Geordie.

One evening, a few weeks after this conversation, I was on duty and I went to make the round of the men's galleries. I had been studying in my room, and it was almost eleven o'clock when I entered the ward kitchen where old Currie, the night attendant, was busy making a brew of hot Ovaltine, which, according to custom, he took to a number of the less robust patients. Currie was over seventy, a steady-going, grey-bearded Highlander, bowed by age but still hearty, who for nearly fifty years had kept night watch in the galleries of Lochlea. I had enjoyed many chats

with Currie over a measure of his nourishing beverage, but tonight as he poured and handed me a cup he glanced at me sideways.

"Geordie had a nasty turn this evening. They've put him in Number 7."

I gazed at him in amazement.

"Blair . . . in Number 7?"

"Aye." Currie nodded. "He was real bad."

I could not understand. *Number 7, in this gallery, was the padded cell.* I thought for an instant that the old man was joking, but the expression on his face dismissed that thought. Puzzled and distressed, I started out of the kitchen, still holding the cup of Ovaltine. If Blair were really ill, he might be glad to have it. As I went down the gallery I heard Currie call after me, but I paid no heed and, using my key, I let myself into Number 7.

At that instant, before I had adjusted myself to the interior gloom, I received a smashing blow on the chest which jerked the hot Ovaltine into my eyes and threw me violently against the door, which instantly slammed shut. Almost blinded—the high, grilled roof light gave only the feeblest gleam—I nevertheless saw enough to recognize my danger and to realize what a fool I had been to incur it. There was raging mania in Blair's expression as he rushed at me again, tore the empty cup out of my hand, and smashed it down on my head.

"Geordie . . . for God's sake . . . don't you know who I am . . . ? Your friend . . ."

He did not answer but drove at me again. Then, with a shudder, I became aware that I was locked up with a homicidal lunatic in the place most dreaded in the whole asylum, a cell so isolated, so impervious to sound, that my cries for help would never reach the gallery.

A cold wave of fear and horror swept over me. I could feel the blood from my lacerated scalp trickling down my neck. But

at all costs I must try to defend myself. As Blair advanced I hit him with all my strength. Although the blow staggered him, I might as well have tried to halt a rushing bull.

I can lay no claim to be a fighter. Yet I had studied the art of self-defence and had sparred many rounds in the Navy. Everything I had ever learned I brought out now with the intensity of desperation. Keeping away from Blair as best I could, I hit him repeatedly with a straight left and crossed my right to the jaw. He was an easy target, making no effort to guard himself, yet all that I could do failed to stop him. Normally he had far greater strength than I, and in his present state of dementia—a state which, while rendering the nervous system impervious to pain, excites the muscles to their highest pitch of action—he completely outmatched me. Again and again he charged in with flailing arms and, although many of his wild swings missed, the weight of these attacks was overwhelming. Utterly spent, I felt my head turn giddy as, with a final rush, he hurled himself upon me and flung me to the floor. Sick and dizzy, I was conscious of his fingers on my throat, compressing my windpipe, choking the breath from my body. Sparks shot before my eyes as I recollected dimly how he had throttled his cousin.

At that second, while my senses swam, I vaguely heard the door burst open and, as in a dream, saw Currie, followed by two young male attendants from the adjoining gallery, dash into the cell. Even as they threw themselves on Blair and the agonizing pressure on my throat relaxed, I realized that old Currie, by going first for adequate help rather than coming to the cell himself, had saved my life. And then I fainted.

Later that night Dr. Gavinton put ten stitches in my head—I still have the scar—and for days afterwards my throat was so painful I could scarcely swallow.

One morning in the following month, as I walked down the avenue to attend a lecture at the University, a gay and cheerful greeting made me turn my head. It was Geordie—brisk, smiling,

affectionate as ever. As I stood there he ran up to me and warmly, glowingly, shook my hand.

"How are you, my dear fellow? Wonderful to see you again. . . . You know, I hated to have to knock you out. But really, it was very wrong of you to make such horrible proposals to my sister."

I stared at him aghast, but had wit enough to mutter: "I'm terribly sorry, Geordie. . . . I was carried away. . . . I'll never do it again."

Often, after that, Geordie begged me to play tennis with him or stood disconsolately with the football hoping for the resumption of our Saturday games. But during the remainder of my sojourn at Lochlea I was wise enough to keep my distance.

Shall I say that I had learned never to trust a man who believes he has a sister, when he happens to be an only child.

CHAPTER 3

"Look, my dear! Did you ever in your life see such an absurdly comic creature!"

A smartly dressed woman passenger on the *SS Ranaganji*, about to sail from Liverpool on the long voyage to Calcutta, made this remark in a high, "well-bred" voice to her companion, a young man with a military yet foppish air. Following their amused gaze, my eyes came to rest upon a squat, very ugly native seaman, with short legs and a large disproportionate head, marred by a cicatrice which ran from ear to temple, whom I recognized as the Indian *serang*, or quartermaster of the ship. He was quietly superintending the crew of lascars now completing the loading of baggage into the hold from the Mersey lighter alongside.

"Looks hardly human," the man agreed, twisting his embryo moustache. "Inclines a chap to believe, don't you know, that old Darwin was not altogether wrong . . . what?"

I turned away silently and went below to my cabin. Three weeks

before, to my inexpressible joy, I had taken my medical degree. Never shall I forget that breathless moment when I discovered, not only that I had passed, but that the examining board had given me honours as well.

And then, as if this were not enough, I had been fortunate enough, through the good offices of one of my professors, Ralph Stockman, to be appointed temporary ship's doctor on the *Ranaganji*.

While he was putting me through my medical "oral," Stockman had decided that I was extremely run down, that the trip to India and back would set me up again.

The voyage began favourably in calm, clear weather. The *Ranaganji* was a stout old tub, manned by white officers, with an entirely native Indian crew. She was exceedingly slow—capable, indeed, of a bare ten knots. This, however, was no defect to the young physician, for whom every day was an added source of sheer delight.

The ship was crowded, packed with the usual tourists and pleasure seekers, as well as cotton and jute merchants bound for Calcutta and Bhagalpur, Ceylon tea planters and Cawnpore mill owners, together with a large number of Anglo-Indian army officers, many of whom were accompanied by their wives and families. From the first night out there was tremendous gaiety on board. Lunch and cocktail parties, sweepstakes on the ship's run, "horse racing" and deck sports of every kind, impromptu concerts and fancy-dress galas—these were but a few of the diversions. For such junkets the ship's doctor is always in demand, and although my inclination lay to more meditative ways, I was usually drawn into the festivities.

Chief among the social promoters—those people who on ship-board excel at "getting things up"—was Miss Jope-Smith, the woman whom I had overheard on the boat deck the morning of our departure and who, with her brother Ronald, a cavalry subaltern, sat, unfortunately, at my table in the dining saloon.

Madge Jope-Smith was not only a snob but a bore. She talked incessantly of her "place" in Cheltenham, her titled friends, her "personal maid," her horses, dogs and exploits in the field of fox-hunting. The leitmotiv of her conversation, reduced to its elemental note, was the superiority of the English upper classes and the need for impressing this upon the subject native races. She constantly abused the table steward, a nice Parsee boy who was well-meaning but slow and, having scolded him into complete confusion, she would cast her bold glance around the table.

"These people have to be kept down, you know. Don't you agree, Ronnie?"

"By Jove, yes." Her brother, quite innocuous, was a dependable echo. "You're absolutely right."

We reached Port Said. Everyone went ashore, excitedly, came back loaded with purchases from Simon Artz, with silks, shawls, cigarettes, scent and jewellery. That night, as the anchor was weighed and we glided into the snaky waters of the Suez Canal, the orchestra played louder than ever, the dance waxed faster and more furious. The desert reached away on either hand, camels and Bedouin encampments were silhouetted against the purple sunset.

On the following morning, as I held my consultations in the surgery, the *serang*, Hasan, appeared, bringing with him two of his lascar deck hands. Waiting in the doorway until I bade him enter, he inclined his head in a respectful salaam and addressed me.

"Doctor Sahib, I fear these men are sick."

The seamen certainly did not look well; they complained of general malaise, of intense headache and racking bone pains. They looked frightened, too, as though suspecting something serious to be amiss, rolling the whites of their eyes as I asked them to strip and began my examination. Both were fevered, with thickly furred tongues and that dry skin, burning to the touch, which is one of nature's gravest warnings. Instinctively I thought of

malaria. But then, to my horror, as I took the pulse, my palpating fingers became aware of a scattering of hard little nodules, exactly like lead shot, under the wrist skin of each man. It was an unmistakable symptom and, inspecting more closely the areas behind the knees and beneath the armpits, I found in each case a definite papular eruption.

Young and inexperienced in my profession, I had not yet acquired that dissimulation which masks the sentence of death with a comforting smile. My expression must have altered visibly for, although the *serang* said nothing, his lined and battered face assumed a look of deeper gravity. For a moment I looked into his eyes and, realizing that he knew as well as I the nature of the malady before us, I could not but experience, as a kind of shock, the resolution, the intrepid calmness of his gaze. Still he said nothing. When I told him in a low voice to wait in the surgery with the men, he again simply inclined his head.

Hurriedly, with pounding heart, I made my way to the bridge. Captain Hamble was not there but in the chartroom below. He looked up sharply as I burst in.

"Sir"—my voice broke—"I have to report smallpox on board. Two of the deck hands."

I saw his lips draw tightly together. He was a thick-set man of fifty-five, with close-cropped hair and sandy, bushy eyebrows, known as a strict disciplinarian, but also as a just and fair-minded officer. Now his brick-dust complexion assumed a deeper tinge.

"Smallpox." He repeated the word under his breath. "You're sure?"

"Quite, sir." And I added, "We have no lymph in our medical supplies."

He bit his lip angrily and, frowning deeply, began to pace up and down the narrow chartroom.

"Doctor," he said, drawing up at last and coming close to me, his words unmistakably grim, "you are in charge of the health of the ship. It's entirely up to you. I can't give you any of my

officers; I'm overloaded and understaffed. But I am going to give you the *serang*. He understands these fellows. And, believe me, he's the finest man I have. Between you, you've got to keep this thing from spreading. And, what's more, don't let a whisper of it get out, or with this fancy lot we have on board we'll have a bloody panic, as sure as God's my Maker."

I left the chartroom, realizing, with a weakness in my stomach, the desperate responsibility of my position. Gone now was the carefree ease I had enjoyed, reclining in a deck chair reading Pierre Loti and dreaming romantically of my own secret desire to write, treating nothing more serious than a cut finger or a case of mild seasickness. Here we were, in the middle of the Arabian Sea, fifteen hundred passengers aboard, no means whatever of vaccinating them, and smallpox . . . the most deadly contagion in the whole dictionary of disease.

Back in the surgery one of the lascars was in the grip of a violent rigor. I turned from the shivering man to the *serang*, whose incalculable eyes remained fixed upon me.

"You know?" I asked him.

"Yes, Sahib. I have seen this before."

"We've got to isolate these men . . . check on the contacts. . . ." As I spoke, trying to assume a cheerfulness and confidence I did not feel, Hasan quietly acquiesced.

"Yes, Sahib . . . I shall do what I can to help you."

There was no sick bay on board, not an inch of available cabin space. One look at the crowded forecastle showed the impossibility of segregating the infected men anywhere in the crew's quarters.

"We will make a shelter on the afterdeck, Doctor Sahib," the *serang* said. "Very cool there. With plenty of fresh air."

In the stern of the ship, admirably protected from view by a battery of derricks and donkey engines, he set to work. Within an hour, he had erected, with silent efficiency, a large canvas shelter, tautly secured and roped off from the surrounding deck.

Mattresses and sheets were then brought up and the two patients comfortably installed. Our next step was to muster the crew for a thorough medical inspection. One of the stokers, who complained of fever and headache, showed the beginnings of the typical rash. He was isolated with the other cases.

"And now . . . who is going to help me attend to these men?"

Hasan glanced at me in surprise.

"Why, naturally, it is I."

"You must be careful. This disease is most contagious."

"I am not afraid, Doctor Sahib."

Together, Hasan and I sponged the patients with permanganate solution, administered to each man a strong antipyretic, hung sheets soaked in disinfectant round the shelter, and set up within this little secret area of quarantine a cooking stove where liquids could be heated and simple meals prepared. Finally, while the passengers were at lunch, we cleared the night watch from the forecastle and, with some sulphur candles which Hasan disinterred from the ship's stores, thoroughly fumigated the crew's quarters. With this accomplished, I felt somewhat easier in my mind.

At the muster which I held at daybreak next morning, however, I found three fresh cases. The men already segregated were much worse, covered from head to toe by that eruption which is a symptom of the disease. And that same afternoon, four more of the crew sickened. We now had ten cases in our makeshift lazaretto. It was a situation to test the strongest nerves. But the *serang*, calm and unperturbed, his eyes steadfast beneath the misshapen frontal bones of his dark, cicatrized face, gave me fresh heart. Merely to be beside him made it difficult to despair. In tending the patients he was indefatigable, giving them water, relieving their intolerable skin irritation with the lotion I had made up, cooking for them on the makeshift galley, always on hand when I needed him to help me lift and sponge a semi-conscious man—and all this carried out with complete and contemptuous disregard for his own safety.

"Be careful of yourself," I had to beg him. "Do not go quite so close."

Now, indeed, he showed his strong teeth, stained with betel nut, in a sudden, fleeting smile, tinged with such native sadness that it broke only for an instant his deep and natural tranquillity.

"Are you careful of yourself, Doctor Sahib?"

"Indeed I am. Besides, this is my work."

"Do not worry, Doctor Sahib. I am strong. And it is my work, too."

By this time, except for emergency calls, I had placed myself more or less in quarantine. To allay suspicion, it was given out that I had caught a chill and was indisposed. I ceased to go to the dining saloon, and all my meals were brought on a tray to my cabin. In the evening, as I sat at my solitary dinner, hearing the music of the string band and the sway and shuffle of the dancers on the deck above, it was difficult to restrain a mood of bitterness. Morbidly I watched my own person for the first sign of the disease, not from fear—oddly, I was so weighed down by responsibility that I had slight concern for myself—but with a queer detachment and the conviction that I would contract the malady. And in this state of heightening tension I cursed the slowness of the ship, that lack of speed which had previously given me cause for satisfaction. Although we were moving full steam ahead, Colombo, the nearest port of call, was still eight days away.

In the course of the next forty-eight hours four more stokers went to join the others on the afterdeck. A total of fourteen now. And one of the earlier victims had lapsed into coma, seemed likely to die at any hour. Under this added load, I could not sleep and, though I spent most of the daylight hours in the lazaretto, even at night I could not keep away from the stern of the ship. And there, where I knew I should find him, watchful and mute under the stars, was the *serang*.

How shall I describe the solace which flowed towards me from



him as he stood there, in meditation, silhouetted against the taff-rail, with his long arms folded on his bare chest, motionless as a statue? A silver whistle, symbol of his office, hung by a lanyard from his muscular neck. The tropic moon, rolling in the velvet sky, brought out the deep lines on his face which had the immobility of carved ebony. When a sick man groaned faintly with the pain of his tormented universe, he would step forward, without sound, to succour him.

He had no fondness for speech. But despite the silences of our long night vigils I gathered, gradually, some fragments of his history. He had, as a boy, taken to a seafaring life. For nearly forty years he had given himself to the oceans of the world, and fifteen of these years had been spent on the *Ranaganji*. Small wonder he regarded the old ship as his home. He had never married. The tackle block which, falling from the masthead, had so frightfully broken and disfigured his features had turned his thoughts from women.

By religion he was a Jain, yet there was in him something far beyond the teaching of the sects, a faith inculcated by the purifying eternal wind, the beauty and the desolation of great waters, by the united mysteries of a thousand landfalls and departures.

In all his life he had acquired nothing, neither property nor money—his few possessions, contained in his ship chest, might be worth a few rupees. The thought hurt me and, in an access of mistaken sympathy, I exclaimed: "Hasan, you are doing so much in this emergency, the company must give you extra pay."

His forehead creased perplexedly. He was silent for a long moment, a silence broken only by the slow thud of the propeller shaft and the wheezing rattle of the sick. Then he answered: "What use is money, Doctor Sahib, to one who has all he needs? I am well enough the way I am."

Standing with him, in the liquid moonlight, I was stung by a strange pang. Beside his clear simplicity the world's values suddenly seemed dross. Indeed, as I viewed my own outlook

towards the future, my passionate desire for success and wealth, I was conscious of a secret shame. From the sighing emptiness of the night, there came to me the echo of those immortal words: "O ye of little faith! Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

On the following day we lost two of our patients. It was Hasan himself who sewed their shrouds, who in his hoarse and hollow voice read aloud a short prayer before their bodies, wrapped in sailcloth, with a weight at their feet, were cast overboard at midnight.

No fresh cases developed. And a week later, in the sulphurous light of early dawn, we anchored off Colombo. Before the first of the passengers was awake, the port doctor had completed his inspection and the yellow quarantine flag had been lowered. Several of the patients showed signs of having passed the crisis, but three, helpless and delirious, a mass of running sores, were carried to the lighter, like children, in the arms of Hasan. As we stood together, watching the flat launch bobbing towards the shore, I saw that the *serang's* dark cheeks were wet with tears.

I had barely time to recover myself, or to realize that the epidemic had been confined, before we had navigated the mud flats of the Hoogli and were anchored alongside the quay at Calcutta. A general celebration marked our arrival—sirens blowing, favours floating in the breeze, final rounds of drinks, the decks crowded with people waving and shouting greetings to friends meeting them on the dock. Suddenly, at my elbow, I heard the familiar shrilling of Miss Jope-Smith.

"Oh, look, look, Ronnie. There's that absurd creature again."

Once more I followed their united gaze. And there, again, down in the afterhold, knocking out the hatch battens to unload the baggage, his squat figure foreshortened from above, with long arms swinging, more ungainly than ever, was the object of their mirth—Hasan.

The lady from Cheltenham swung round, bent her wit, her fascinations upon me.

"Where did you keep him all the voyage, Doctor, dear? In a special cage?"

Silence—a vision of the *serang's* nobility rising before me.

"Yes . . . in a way . . . it was a cage. . . . But isn't it queer, Miss Jope-Smith—the animals were all outside."

Though I kept my voice even, I thought that I should suffocate. Abruptly I turned away, went below to my cabin and beat my clenched fists hard against the wooden bulkhead.

CHAPTER 4



AT THE END of the voyage home, Captain Hamble had pressed me to remain with the *Ranaganji* but at the same time had honestly advised me against lapsing into a routine which, to his knowledge, had turned many an eager and ambitious young man into a lazy and lackadaisical ship's surgeon. I was fully aware of the sound sense in Hamble's warning, and hearing from a classmate at the University that there was an assistantship vacant in Tannochbrae—"Not much, mind you . . . Regular country practice . . . and he's a hard nut, old Cameron, though a rare good sort at heart"—I had, not without reluctance, quitted my berth in the ship.

THE RAIN dripped miserably as my cab swung into the drive of Dr. Cameron's residence and surgery, Arden House, a soundly built white stone dwelling with a coach house at the side and a semi-circular spread of lawn in front. I sprang up the front steps

and rang the bell. After a minute, the door opened and the house-keeper, a thin, elderly woman, dressed entirely in black, confronted me. Her hair was tightly drawn, and in her bleak face was stamped authority mingled with a certain grudging humanity. For a few seconds she inspected me, my bag, my hat, even my boots; then, with a slight elevation of her brows, my luxurious background of horse and cab.

"Ye've a cab!" she observed severely. "Well! I suppose you'd better come in. Don't forget to wipe your feet."

I dutifully wiped my feet and went in, feeling that I had made a bad beginning.

She showed me into a big, comfortable room—the dining-room, it was—with warm red curtains and red Turkey carpet, a blazing coal fire and furniture of sound mahogany. A big bowl of apples on the sideboard, a full glass barrel of biscuits and whisky in the square-cut decanter. No pictures, no photographs, but, of all things, three yellow violins hanging on the walls. A good—oh, a decent room to live in. I was warming myself at the blaze when the door opened and Cameron came stamping in.

"That's right," said Cameron, without a handshake or a word of preamble, "warm your backside at the fire while I work myself to death outside. Janet! Janet!"—at the pitch of his lungs—"Bring in our tea."

He was a medium-sized oldish man with a face beaten bright crimson by Scots weather and Scots whisky, and a pugnacious little grey imperial, now dewed with raindrops. He stooped slightly, so that his head had a forward, belligerent thrust. He wore gaiters, cord breeches and a big, baggy tweed jacket of a nondescript, vaguely greenish colour, the side pockets stuffed to the bursting point with everything from an apple to a gum-elastic catheter. About him there hung invariably the odour of drugs, carbolic and strong tobacco.

Obtaining a good three-quarters of the fire, he inspected me sideways and asked abruptly:

"Are ye strong? Sound in wind and limb?"

"I hope so!"

"Married?"

"Not yet."

"Thank God! Can ye play the fiddle?"

"No!"

"Neither can I—but I can make them bonny. Do ye smoke a pipe?"

"I do!"

"Humph! Do ye drink whisky?"

My dander had been rising under this interrogation. I don't like you, I thought, as I looked at the odd, unprofessional figure beside me, and I never will. I answered surlily:

"I drink what I like, and when I like!"

The spark of a smile gleamed in Cameron's eye.

"It might be worse," he murmured, and then: "Sit in and have your tea."

Janet had swiftly and silently set the table—cake, buns, toast, preserve, brown bread, home-baked scones, cheese and bannocks—and now, with the big brown teapot, she brought in a huge dish of cold ham and poached eggs.

"There's no falderals in this house," Cameron explained briefly as he poured the tea—he had beautiful hands, I noticed, hard-skinned yet supple. "Breakfast, middle-day dinner, high tea and supper—plain food and plenty. We work our assistant here, but—by your leave—we don't starve him."

We were well through the meal when Janet came in with more hot water. Only then did she say impassively:

"There's a man been waiting this last half-hour—young Lachlan Mackenzie, him that has the steading up Inverbeg way. His bairn's badly, he makes out."

Cameron arrested a piece of oatcake halfway to his mouth to let out his favourite oath:

"Dammit to hell!" he cried, "and we up at Inverbeg this

mornin' and passed his very door. Th'infernal eediot! I'll wager the child's been sick for days. Do they all think I'm made of steel?" He checked himself. Then, with a sigh which seemed to let off all his boiling steam, he added in quite a different voice, "All right, Janet. All right. Let him come in here now."

In a moment Mackenzie stood in the doorway. "It's the boy, Doctor," he muttered, twisting his cap. "The wife thinks it's the croup. He's been poorly for two days—but we didna' think it was the croup. . . ."

"Aye, aye, Lachlan. The croup! Just so, just so." A pause. "All right, man! Don't ye worry. Away with Janet now and have your tea while the gig's bein' got round."

Silence in the dining-room when he had gone. Cameron reflectively stirred his tea. Almost apologetically he said: "I can't be hard on a poor devil like that. It's a weakness I never seem to get over. He owes me for his wife's last confinement—he'll never pay it. But I'll get out the gig, drive seven miles, see the child, drive seven miles back. And what do ye think I'll mark against him in the book? One and six—if I don't forget. And what does it matter if I do forget? He'll never pay me a red bawbee in any case. What a life for a man who loves fiddles!"

Silence again; then I ventured: "Shall I do the call?"

Cameron took a long pull at his tea. The bright satire was back in his eye as he said: "That's a braw wee black bag ye've got—aye, I see it on the sofa—brand-new and shiny, with your stethoscope and all the new contrivances inside, bonny and complete. No wonder ye're fair itchin' to use it." He looked me straight in the face. "All right! Ye can go. But let me warn you, my lad, in a practice like mine it's not the bag that matters—it's the man!" He got up. "Do the call then, and take some antitoxin with ye to be safe. It's on the right-hand shelf as ye go in the back room. Here! I'll show ye. I'm not wantin' ye to drive seven miles to find out that croup is liable to mean diphtheria."

The gig was waiting outside the front porch, with Lachlan

already in the back—the young fellow had walked the seven miles into the village—and Jamie, the groom, stood ready with the waterproof sheet. We set off through the wet, blustery night.

It was bad, bad going. The road was dark, too, the gig lamps so blurred by a film of mud that Jamie had difficulty in keeping the horse upon the road. We went on through the pitch blackness and the rain in silence. Finally we stopped at a small steading where a single illuminated window seemed somehow swamped and hopeless in the great void of sodden blackness.

As we climbed out of the gig, Lachlan's wife opened the door. She looked no more than a girl despite her clumsy sacking apron and uncouth brogues. A coil of hair fell carelessly down her neck, and her big eyes were dark and youthful against the anxious pallor of her face. She helped me out of my wet coat in silence; then, though she still said not a word, her worried eye indicated the kitchen bed. I walked over to it, my boots squelching on the stone-flagged floor.

A little boy of three lay tossing under a single blanket, his brow damp with sweat, his face completely livid as he gasped for breath. With my finger I depressed the child's tongue. Yes! The whole of the fauces covered with thick membrane. Laryngeal diphtheria!

"I've made him some gruel, Doctor," the mother murmured, "but he doesna . . . doesna seem to fancy it."

"He can't swallow," I said. Because I was nervous my voice sounded unsympathetic, even harsh.

"Is he bad then, Doctor?" she whispered, with a hand at her breast.

Bad! I thought. She doesn't dream how bad he is! There was no doubt at all—the child was dying. How horrible, I thought, that this should be my first case.

I opened my bag, filled my big syringe, and gave the child 8,000 units of antidiphtheritic serum. To gain time I went back to the fire. What was I to do? I knew very well what I should do. But I was afraid. I returned to the bed. If anything, the boy was worse.

In half an hour, before the serum could act, he would be dead from obstruction of the windpipe. Another wave of fear came over me. I had to make up my mind. I felt myself so young, so utterly inept and inexperienced in the face of the great elemental forces which surged within the room. I faced round, and in a manner wholly unimpressive I said:

"The boy has diphtheria. The membrane is blocking the larynx. There's only one thing to do. Operate. Open the windpipe below the obstruction."

The mother wrung her hands, and screamed:

"Oh, no, Doctor, no!"

At a word from me, Jamie lifted the almost senseless child on to the scrubbed pine table. Lachlan cried weakly, "I'll away and put the horse in the stable." Blubbering, he rushed out.

Now the mother had recovered herself. Pale as a ghost, her hands clenched fiercely, she looked at me.

"Tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

"Stand there and hold his head back tight!"

I swabbed the skin of the child's throat with iodine. I took a clean towel and laid it across those glazing eyes. The case was now far beyond an anæsthetic. Jamie was holding the oil lamp near. Setting my teeth, I picked up the lancet. I made the incision with a steady hand, but I felt my legs trembling beneath me. I must go deeper, deeper—go boldly in, yet watch all the time for the jugular vein. I widened the incision, using the blunt end of the scalpel, searching desperately for the white cartilage of the trachea. The child, roused by pain, struggled like a fish in a strangling net. God! Would I never find it? I cursed myself in spirit. The child would die; they would say that I had killed him. Beads of sweat broke out on my brow, as I remembered, suddenly, Mac-ewen's fatal words: "*You will never be a surgeon.*"

The child's breathing was terrible now, thin, infrequent. The neck veins were engorged, the throat livid, the face blackening. Not a minute longer, I thought! He's finished, and so am I. For

one sickening instant I had a quick vision of the cold, immaculate precision of the Infirmary theatre, and then, by frightful contrast, this struggling, desperate thing dying under my knife upon a kitchen table by the flare of an oil lamp, while the wind howled and stormed outside. Oh, God, I prayed, help me, help me now.

Under my searching knife the thin white tube sprang into view. Swiftly I incised it, and in the instant the child's gasping ceased. Instead, a long clear breath of air went in through the opening. Another—another. The cyanosis vanished, the pulse strengthened. Swept by a terrific reaction, I felt that I was going to collapse. Afraid to move, I kept my head down to hide the smarting tears that sprang into my eyes. I've done it, I thought; oh, God, I've done it after all!

Later I slipped the tiny silver tracheotomy tube into the opening and lifted the boy back to bed. The temperature had fallen a point and a half. I sat by the bedside, watching, cleaning the tube. From time to time the mother replenished the fire so silently she was like a shadow in the room. Jamie and Lachlan were asleep upstairs. At five in the morning I gave another 4,000 units of serum. At six the child was sleeping, far less restive than before. At seven I rose and stretched myself. Smiling, I said:

"He'll do now, I expect!" And I explained to the mother the method of cleaning out the tube. "In ten days it'll all be healed up good as new."

It was close on nine when, tired, unshaven, and clutching the mud-splashed bag, I stumbled into the dining-room of Arden House. Cameron was there, fresh as a new pin, whistling a little tune softly. He looked me up and down; then, with a dry twinkle in his eye, before I could speak he declared:

"There's one guid thing has happened anyway! Ye've taken the newness off your bag."

CHAPTER 5

TANNOCHBRAE, as the spring came, lost all its bleakness. Wrapped in soft airs, the blue sky feathered by fleecy clouds, the cottage gardens filled with the scent of honeysuckle and the hum of bees, the hillsides alive with the bleating of lambs, the village became a sweet and pleasant place. Trout were leaping in the mountain burns, and whenever I had a spare hour I sought them with all the throbbing eagerness of an insatiable fisherman. I was happy in my work, becoming attached to my crusty old colleague, free, on my occasional day off, to travel to Glasgow to visit the girl I could not forget, who still was attending medical classes at the University. I even felt myself winning some faint signs of favour from our primly disapproving housekeeper when, unfortunately, I was involved in a serious and most worrying dispute.

In May an outbreak of scarlet fever occurred in the district, affecting chiefly the children, and it showed no signs of abating in the ordinary way. As the days passed, and one case followed another despite all our efforts at treatment and isolation, I lost patience and told myself I must get to the root of the matter. Some specific factor was disseminating the disease and I pledged myself to find it.

At the outset I realized that I could expect little help from the public health authorities. At this time the medical officer of health to the county was Dr. Snoddie, a rather self-important practitioner who had married a Knoxhill woman, a rich widow slightly older than himself. Since his marriage he had set out to cultivate the best "county" families. He wore a cutaway coat and kept a brougham. He had come to regard his public office as a sinecure and was content to draw his honorarium of fifty guineas a year without in the least exerting himself to earn it.

There was one point common to all the cases I had met, and that was the milk supply, which came in every instance from the farm adjacent to Tannochbrae known as Shawhead. I was convinced that the Shawhead milk was the origin of the epidemic. I had no proof, of course, merely a suspicion, but it was enough to make me resolve to act. One day, as I was passing Shawhead, I drew up the gig and called in at the farm.

It was a pretty place, with whitewashed farm buildings against which rambler roses were already beginning to bloom. Everything was sweet and clean, the surrounding fields well cared for and in good heart.

Small wonder it was that Rob Hendry should be so proud to own this fine dairy and the pedigree Ayrshire herd which often won him prizes at the local show. Known colloquially as Shawhead—taking the name from the land that was his patrimony—Rob was a big, craggy man of about fifty, with iron-grey hair. Shawhead's whole life was bound up in two interests: his farm and his young wife, Jean, whom he had recently married and whom, for all his dourness, he plainly adored.

When I knocked, it was Jean herself who answered, and at my question she smiled and shook her head.

"No," she answered, "the good man's out. He's gone to Ardfil-lan market with some calves. He'll not be back till this afternoon."

She was a bonny lass, with pink cheeks and fine coppery hair braided trimly behind her ears. Not more than twenty-three, she had an appealing air of innocence. As I surveyed her against the background of the well-kept steading, the suspicions I had formed began to waver.

"So Shawhead's out," I temporized.

"Aye," she answered, "but he'll be home the back of four. Will you look in then, or is there any message I could give him?"

I hesitated.

"As a matter of fact, Mrs. Hendry, it's rather an awkward business I've come about. This outbreak of scarlet fever . . . It's

spreading, you know, and I find that in all my cases . . . well, not to put too fine a point on it—the milk has come from Shawhead. I want to be quite open with you. I wondered if I might look into things and see if, by any chance, the cause of the trouble might be here.”

At my words, her frank expression altered. Her face clouded.

“The fever!” she cried indignantly. “To mention it even . . . in the same breath as our good milk! To be sure, Doctor, if it’s that you’ve come about, you’d better see the master.”

And without further parley she closed the door in my face.

Discouraged by this setback, I got back to the gig and continued my morning round. I had half a mind to let the matter drop, but at the next house when I found that one of my fever cases had taken a turn for the worse, and that his brother showed signs of sickening with the complaint, I felt I could not abandon my original purpose. At midday, I mentioned my intention to Dr. Cameron. Cameron listened; then the corners of his mouth drew down dubiously.

“It looks like the milk,” he said slowly. “And yet I can’t think it, either. Shawhead has a model place out there.” He paused. “Go and see him, by all means, but be careful how you set about it. He’s a touchy deevil, and his temper’s like tinder.”

That afternoon I returned to Shawhead farm and knocked once again. There was no immediate answer, so I wandered across the yard into the dairy, which, however, was empty. I then turned into the byre. Leaning against the doorway, I observed the fine, sleek animals in the stalls. I then watched the byreman, David Orr, known familiarly as Davit, take the three-legged stool and, sitting close to the first animal, begin the milking.

My eyes dwelt in a kind of fascination upon Davit, for he had a pale and sickly look, and round his throat was wrapped a twist of red flannel. Advancing cautiously, I greeted him.

“It’s you, Doctor!” said Davit. “I’d no idea you were here. Are you after a glass of milk?”

Unsmiling, I shook my head. "I'll have no milk today, Davit." And then, indicating the red flannel casually, "What's like the matter with your neck?"

Davit paused in his milking and gave a self-conscious laugh.

"Oh, it's nothing—nothing at all, ye ken. I had a sore throat some weeks past, and it's left me kind of poorly, but it's nothing at all."

My gaze became more intent.

"A sore throat!" I echoed; then slowly, "Did you have any rash, Davit, with the sore throat that ye had?"

"Rash?" echoed Davit stupidly. "And what in the name of wonder might that be?"

I made to explain, to press my inquiries; then all at once I caught sight of Davit's hands and stopped short. Now there was no need to seek further. The answer came from Davit's hands, so busily employed in milking the cow, for from each of those hands fine particles of skin were peeling.

The evidence was conclusive—the fine powdery scaling, like a dust of bran, which invariably follows scarlet fever, and which, coupled with the fact of the sore throat, convinced me beyond all shadow of doubt that Davit had had the disease in ambulant form and that he had not only contaminated the milk, but had almost certainly infected the udders of the cows.

Suddenly a loud voice broke the stillness of the byre.

"So you're here, are you? Spying around into other people's business?"

Shawhead himself had appeared, dark with anger. Behind him stood his wife, gazing resentfully at me. I could not possibly avoid the issue.

"I'm sorry, Shawhead. I'm not here from choice." I pointed to the staring byreman. "Davit here has had scarlet fever, probably a slight attack, but enough to do a lot of damage." I tempered my words as best I could. "It looks as if you might have to shut up your dairy for a week or two."

"Shut up my dairy!" Shawhead exclaimed. "You must be mad."

"Be reasonable," I pleaded. "You're not to blame. But the fact remains, it's here the infection has come from."

"The infection! How dare you, man. We're all clean folks in this farm."

"Yes, but Davit . . ."

"Davit's as clean as the rest of us," cried Shawhead. "He's had a bit sore throat and no more. He's better now."

"I tell you," I persisted, with as much patience as I could muster, "that he has had scarlet fever. He's scaling all over his body. That's what is contaminating your milk."

Here the veins on Shawhead's forehead stood out. He could not contain himself.

"That's enough! My fine milk contaminated! It's pure sweet milk, and always has been. Don't you know we drink it ourselves?"

And in an excess of indignation he took the dipper and plunged it in the milk. Raising the brimming measure in a gesture of defiance, he drank half himself, then gave the rest to Jean.

"There!" He flung down the dipper. "That'll show you. And if you speak another word you'll bitterly regret it."

I understood the farmer's wounded pride, but I had my duty. I turned away in silence.

That afternoon I went to the house of Dr. Snoddie in Knoxhill and asked that he take steps immediately, in his official capacity, to meet the situation.

The health officer, seated at his desk, inspected me over his gold-rimmed pince-nez. He had little love for Dr. Cameron and was obviously pleased that I had come to seek a favour of him.

"I'll look into it, of course," he remarked in a patronizing tone. "But, frankly, I cannot see that you have any real grounds for your request. There's no positive evidence—no rash, no fever, nothing but a mere supposition on your part. You must remember that it is an extremely serious matter to shut down a man's business on what may be merely unfounded conjecture."

I flushed hotly. "Conjecture be hanged! That farm is the focus of the trouble. I'll swear to it."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Snoddie, with an astringent smile. "Well, we shall see. You'll hear from me in the course of a day or so."

For twenty-four hours nothing happened; then, on the day following, as we sat at lunch, the expected note was delivered by hand.

I read it, then passed the paper to Dr. Cameron, who studied it, gazed at me covertly and sighed:

"It's what you might expect of friend Snoddie. But what can we do? If he won't close we must sit tight and hope for the best."

"And find ourselves with a dozen more cases? No, thanks!" I spoke with sudden violence. "If we can't get official action, we'll do it the other way."

"Now, be careful," remonstrated Cameron. "He's a dangerous man, is Shawhead."

"No more dangerous than his milk." And before Cameron could reply I walked out of the room.

In the course of my visits during that day and the next I asked my patients to refrain from using the Shawhead milk supply. Despite my vexation, and a burning sense of being ill-used and misunderstood, I spoke with discretion. But far from being treated as a confidence, in no time at all the news went round the district.

The resultant storm thoroughly dismayed me. All the excitement which local controversy arouses in a small community was in active operation. People took sides, tongues wagged, the dispute became the chief topic of interest in the district.

Sustained but little by the consciousness that I was in the right, I could do no more than stick grimly to my guns. But on the Friday of the same week a document arrived which shook me even more severely. It was no less than a writ issued by the farmer through Logan and Logan, Knoxhill solicitors, for slander. Shawhead was "having the law on me."

As the days went on and I became more fully aware of my position, realizing that I must go into open court to face the charges

laid against me, with my reputation hanging upon the decision that was to be given, I was far from confident.

I found people looking at me oddly, even in the streets of Knox-hill. Dr. Snoddie, driving past in his brougham, avoided my gaze with an obviousness which told me I should receive no support from him.

And then, late one afternoon, as I sat moodily in the surgery, worrying over all that had passed and all that must so shortly take place, Dr. Cameron came in with a strange expression upon his face.

"Have you heard?" He spoke in a low, restrained tone. "She's down with it. Acute scarlet fever. Shawhead's wife, Jean Hendry herself."

One astounded instant. Then a terrific wave of vindication swept over me. In a flash I remembered Shawhead's defiant gesture as he passed the dipper of milk.

"They'll never go on with the case now," Cameron meditated. "They tell me Shawhead's near off his head with anxiety. It's a judgment."

The village gasped at the turn of events, and allowing due sympathy for Shawhead, opinion swung round like a weathercock in a change of wind. I became at one stroke protector of the people and the public health of Tannochbrae. But I would have none of the congratulations which folks tried to offer me as I went about my work, for now it was known that Jean Hendry was desperately ill. Her temperature was reported to be mounting rapidly, and she was delirious.

Shawhead had forbidden her removal to the hospital at Knox-hill, and now, in truth, was the dairy closed. Dr. Snoddie, with a sour and worried face, was in close attendance, and a specialist had been summoned from Glasgow.

In spite of all this, Jean Hendry grew worse. On the Sunday it was reported that she was sinking, and a kind of silence settled over Tannochbrae. Not a word passed between Cameron and my-

self. Then, towards the evening of that quiet day Janet, the house-keeper, entered the living-room. Her face was drawn in noncommittal lines and her voice was sombre as she said:

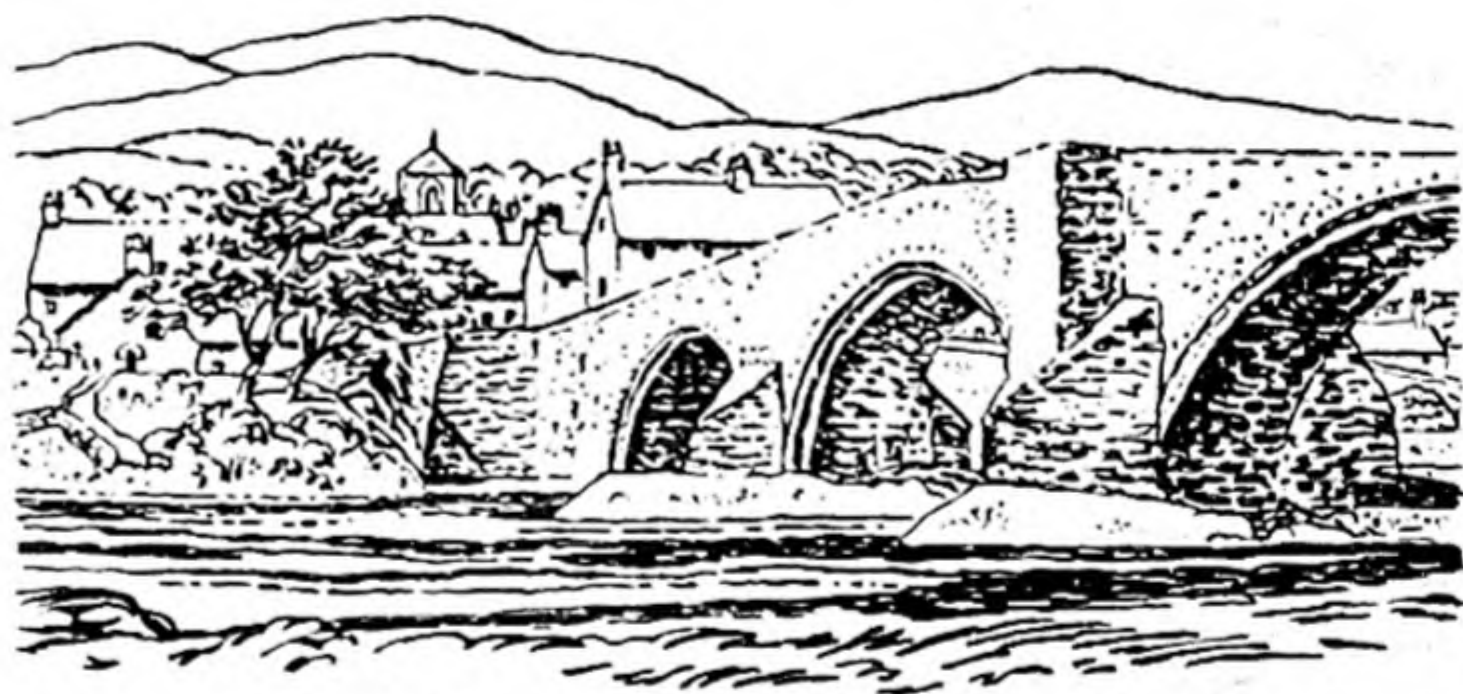
"It's all done with now. Jamie just brought in the word. She's gone."

I turned my head away. Outside, a bell began to toll.

Six weeks later, I met Shawhead for the first time since our encounter in the barn. The farmer, aged and broken by his loss, was returning from the churchyard. Awkwardly, I stopped in the middle of the pathway, and almost mechanically Shawhead stopped, too. Our eyes met, and each read in the face of the other the knowledge of what might have been, the terrible knowledge that his wife might now have been quick and alive beside him, not cold in her narrow grave.

A kind of groan broke from Shawhead's pale lips, and slowly he reached out his hand, which met mine in a long and tortured grasp.

CHAPTER 6



WHEN I had been in Tannochbrae for the better part of a year, although I liked the place and the people and had moreover a genuine affection for the testy old party who employed me, my thoughts began to turn towards the future. Ambition still burned bright within me. I was now more than ever in love with Mary, and since so many obstacles were already in the way of our marriage, I felt I must at least try to offset them with some material advantages. Could this be achieved within the narrow confines of a small West Highland village?

At this stage of uncertainty and doubt, a series of events took place which, in a singularly irrational manner, were instrumental in determining my next move. It all began, ridiculously enough, with a fishbone.

The fishbone was in the throat of Mr. George McKellor and, because of it, one April evening about nine o'clock I was called to the McKellor villa, which stood in its own grounds on the outskirts of the village. I found McKellor in considerable pain, although making little fuss about it. He was a taciturn man, a confirmed bachelor, with the uncommunicative abruptness of one who has made his way in life entirely through his own efforts. By profession a grain merchant, he travelled every day to his office in Glasgow, where he was a highly successful operator on the commodity markets, known to be worth a tidy fortune.

The offending bone was easy to locate, and with one quick stroke of the forceps, I removed it from McKellor's throat. The relief was instantaneous. He drew a deep breath of ease, swallowed once or twice wryly, then smiled his slow, unwilling smile. "I must say I'm obliged to you for looking in so quickly," he said and paused significantly. "And now—I'm a man for prompt settlements, Doctor. How much do I owe you?"

I put the question aside with a deprecating smile.

"It was nothing. Just a neighbourly action to run in and tweak it out for you. We'll charge you no fee at all."

George McKellor's stare was inscrutable. He had the look of a man with the money sense who has struck many a hard bargain in his day. After stroking his square chin reflectively, he finally exclaimed:

"Sit down. We'll have a drop of Scotch and a chat, you and me."

When he had poured the whisky, and we had lit our pipes, McKellor went on, noncommittally enough, yet with something compelling and confidential in his tone.

"I've heard of you, Doctor, one way and another, and it hasn't all been to your discredit." A dry smile. "I'm not given to sudden

likings, but one good turn deserves another." He paused and took a deliberate pull at his whisky. "Tell me, young fellow, have you ever heard of Roan Vlei?"

Half amused, I shook my head.

"Never," I said. "It's a share, I suppose. Anyhow, it sounds like it."

"Aye," retorted McKellor, "it's a share, all right, a Kaffir gold mine, to be exact." He lowered his voice and spoke from between closed lips, as though the words were drawn from some secret fount of knowledge. "A few of us have information on the inside. We've formed a pool. It's in for a rise, a real big rise." Another long pause. "Doctor, I advise you to buy yourself a few Roan Vleis."

I laughed, pleased yet embarrassed.

"It's kind of you, I'm sure, Mr. McKellor, but—well, that's not my line of business."

McKellor fixed me with his friendly but enigmatic stare.

"You take my tip," he said, tapping the table in emphasis. "I promise you'll not regret it." And with a solemn gesture he pushed the whisky decanter towards me.

I slept little that night. At the outset I had not had the least intention of following McKellor's advice. But now the seed was sown, there developed in my mind the enticing idea that here was a chance to acquire the capital so necessary for my future plans—for house, practice and marriage alike—a miraculous opportunity which it would be folly to ignore. I had a snug little nest egg of about one hundred pounds, saved since I had begun my assistantship. What was to prevent me doubling, trebling it, perhaps turning it into a real bonanza? All sorts of golden fancies kept flashing before me, and in the morning when I rose I telephoned McKellor and told him of my decision.

"You're a wise man, Doctor," he said crisply. "Get in touch with Hamilton, my broker, in Ingram Street. He'll look after you. Mark my words, you'll not be sorry."

Hamilton proved exceptionally helpful. As the sum at my disposal was not large and the price of Roan Vleis rather high—they stood that morning at just under a pound per share—the broker proposed that I should operate on margin. Thus I should be able to purchase not one hundred, but five hundred shares. Who could have refused such a suggestion, with its prospects of greater gain? Over the telephone, the momentous transaction was completed.

The next few days passed in a state of tension and excitement. There was nothing in the newspapers, not one word from George McKellor. The stock market was as flat as a pancake, and the wretched shares stood at a few pence below the figure at which I had bought them. I began to ask myself in a kind of anguish if I had not been overcredulous.

But, at last, one morning towards the end of the second week when, sick with hope deferred, I opened the *Winton Herald*, my heart gave a sudden bump. I saw that Roan Vleis had jumped a clear four shillings. I had made practically one hundred pounds. Incredible! The blood went pounding through my veins. I raced to the telephone and rang up McKellor.

"I've just seen the news," I stammered delightedly over the wire. "It's great, isn't it? Shall I . . . shall I sell?"

McKellor's voice was calmly incredulous. "Sell out at the very beginning? Are you gone wuddy? No, no, not on your life. You wait until I give you the word. Sell at that instant, and not before." And, with a click, the receiver went up at the other end.

Flushed and elated, with my head in a whirl, I went into the surgery and tried to settle to my work. It was difficult to concentrate, and during the next few days I hurried through my cases so that I might have more time to watch the progress of my speculation.

A great game, indeed! For now they had started, Roan Vleis rose on the market like a rocket. By the end of the week they stood at almost double their original figure. The news, which had been discreetly rumoured, was now given out with full publicity

—a vein of rich ore had been struck in the mine. In consequence, everyone was rushing to buy.

I was constantly on the telephone to the stockbroker, in touch with McKellor morning and evening, kept in a perfect whirl of excitement. My original desire to sell and take a modest profit was long forgotten. Here was the chance of a lifetime to make a fortune. I went in deeper than ever, buying on margin until I held not far short of twelve hundred shares. My profit already stood at over seven hundred pounds, and life was wonderful indeed!

My work suffered more and more. When not engrossed by the stock-market reports or busy on the telephone, I kept figuring out my profits. Up and up they went. At the end of a week of the boom they stood not far short of nine hundred pounds. Nine hundred pounds! As much as I might make in two years, slogging winter and summer at the tedious round of medicine. Strung to the highest pitch of tense excitement by the money fever, I awaited McKellor's final instructions.

All this time, while my satisfaction increased, I had been conscious of a growing disapproval on the part of my employer. Once or twice he made to speak, but restrained himself. At last, however, when I came in late for supper one night following an interview with McKellor, the old man darted a glance at me and growled:

"What's come over you these days? You're like a cat on hot bricks. You can't be still. You don't eat, either. And you look as if you can't sleep."

"I'll be all right presently," I excused myself, as I sat in at the table.

"Presently!" exclaimed Cameron. "And why not immediately?"

"Well . . . as a matter of fact, I have something on my mind at the moment."

Cameron rose abruptly, rebuke stamped on every lineament.

"Aye," he said sternly, "I've got a good idea what it is, too, and God knows I don't like it. Let me tell you plainly you're not the

man you were. You're losing your sense of values. And more. You're doing rank bad work. I'm both disappointed and dissatisfied with it." And, coldly, he turned and walked out of the room.

Towards six o'clock on the following morning I was awakened by a call. Cameron's remarks still stung. Was I really being slack and slipshod in order to have more time to devote to this business of getting rich? Eager to justify myself, I welcomed this early summons, tumbled into my clothes, summoned the gig, picked up my bag of instruments, and set out on a long drive to Marklea.

Neglecting my work, I thought bitterly, between indignation and remorse; not the man I was—I'll show him!

In this frame of mind I reached the whitewashed cottage home of George and Elizabeth Dallas, which stood by the lochside in a remote moorland glen, below Marklea.

Elizabeth had been a maid at Dundrum Castle, a worthy, capable person, but already in her fortieth year when Dallas, one of the shepherds on the estate, married her. The marriage had proved to be a happy one and now, rather confounding the prophets, Elizabeth was expecting a child. I had seen her several times recently at the surgery and knew that, more than anything, she wished to present her devoted husband with a son,

Attended by her aged mother, she was already in labour, although not far advanced, when I arrived. Outside, hanging about the back door, too anxious to return to his work, was Dallas. I could see him from the window of the tiny bedroom as I pulled off my coat and rolled up my sleeves.

The patient's pains, slight at first, became deeper and more prolonged. Morning merged insensibly into afternoon. It was now apparent that the case would not be an easy one. Elizabeth's age, and her anxiety that the baby should be well and healthy—all this worked against her. And her heart was not strong.

The afternoon drew in, then at last the moment came for action. Taking mask and ether, I put the poor woman, mercifully, to sleep. A full hour I struggled through the dark ways of difficulty

and danger, before the instrumental delivery was complete. And then, alas, it seemed that half my efforts had been in vain. The child came into the world pale and still. A sigh broke from the old woman.

"God save us, Doctor, the bairn's dead! To think it should be stillborn, Doctor. A boy, too. And her that's never like to have another."

Perspiration was streaming from my brow. I interrupted her harshly:

"Bring some hot water. And cold as well."

At the same time I began to apply artificial respiration to the lifeless child. When the two full basins were brought I lifted the frail, limp body and plunged it first in the warm water, then in the icy cold. Again and again I repeated the process, trying to galvanize the child by shock, using the methods of respiration in between—working desperately, feverishly, with a kind of passionate anger. I toiled and toiled until, when all seemed lost, a faint, feeble, convulsive gasp stirred the infant's chest.

A cry, as if in answer, broke from my dry lips. More desperately still I increased my efforts. Another feeble gasp and another, now less feeble, from the child . . . a little shiver, then shallow but regular respiration. Triumph swelled in me, and the old woman gave a cry of thankfulness and joy.

"It breathes, Doctor!" she gasped. "Oh, God in Heaven, it's come to life!"

Within an hour the little bedroom, restored from its disorder, freed from suffering and sadness, was again neat and clean, the bed made up, the fire burning brightly in the grate, and the mother, pale but joyful, with the baby nestling at her breast, following all my movements with swimming eyes which tried to express her gratitude.

It was almost dusk when I set out on the return drive to Tannochbrae. In the intensity of my endeavour, time had passed unconsidered. What of it? I had vindicated myself, had answered

Cameron's taunt. I felt strangely rested and at peace. And yet, as the gig rattled down the main street, all at once, with a quickening of my heart, I thought of my Roan Vleis and how much they would have risen that day. I stopped the gig and bought an evening paper at the village store.

My eyes almost leapt from my head when I saw stretched across the top of the financial page a glaring headline: **BOTTOM DROPS OUT OF ROAN VLEI BOOM.**

With a sickening sensation in my breast, I rapidly read on. The report of the new vein in Roan Vlei had proved to be erroneous. The mine had struck a fault. In the course of the day Roan Vleis had slumped a full thirty shillings!

Overcome by bewilderment and dismay, I stood a moment facing this incredible disaster; then, with trembling hands, I stuck the paper in my pocket and set out in haste for George McKellor's.

"Come in, Doctor," the grain merchant cried, slapping me on the back with unusual gaiety. "We did it this time right enough, eh?"

I stared at him aghast. "Did it? How do you mean?"

McKellor's expression changed slowly until, quite nonplussed by my chalky countenance, he exclaimed: "You've sold, haven't you—sold like I told you?"

A pause, then I muttered: "No, I haven't sold."

"What!" shouted McKellor in a tone of horror. "You haven't sold? In the name of heaven! Why, man? I rang you at nine this morning and left the message. To make doubly sure I even sent you a telegram. I told you to get out at the peak of the market, before the news of the fault was made public. I told you to sell everything and go a bear on the fall. If you'd done as I told you, you'd have doubled your profit."

There was another silence. He was waiting for me to speak.

"I had a case"—I averted my eyes—"up at Marklea. I never had your message. You see—I've been away all day."

McKellor exploded between exasperation and disgust.

"Away all day! Didn't I tell you to keep in touch with me?" he raged. "Wasn't that more important than your miserable case?"

I did not answer. McKellor bit his lips, controlling himself with difficulty.

"You're a fine man to take trouble over," he said, turning away angrily. "It'll be long enough before I give you another tip."

I walked home slowly with a set and sombre face, all my plans, my grand ideas of riches shattered and in ruins at my feet. Dr. Cameron was seated by the dining-room fire when I went in, and for a moment neither of us spoke. The old doctor's eyes fell upon me as I flung myself into a chair and dejectedly poured myself a cup of tea.

"You've had a long day," said Cameron at last, not unkindly.

"Aye," I replied, and in a brief sentence I reported how the case had gone at Marklea.

"Well," said Cameron, and his tone held a hint of the old friendship, "you did right to stay there all day." He paused. "By the by, there's been an uncommon commotion while you've been away. They were trying to get you from Glasgow all morning. Something about buying and selling." He paused again, significantly. "But I had to tell them you were busy."

"Yes," I said slowly, "I was busy." And all at once a lightness came over me as I remembered the faces of Elizabeth Dallas and her husband, of the old woman, her mother, and, above all, the face of the little child as colour stole into the pallid features, and life reanimated the tiny form!

When settling day arrived I found that the broker had sold me out the moment my margin was exhausted. Their statement showed that not only were my paper profits gone, but all my hundred pounds as well . . . not quite all, for by some technicality, an arithmetical juggling with eighths and sixteenths far beyond my comprehension, there actually remained of my original capital the sum of seven pounds fifteen shillings. A cheque for this amount was enclosed.

Gazing in silent bitterness at that infernal strip of paper, I was overcome by a strange impulse. I went that afternoon to the town of Knoxhill where, in the High Street, stood the establishment of a country jeweller named Jenkins. We spoke together, Jenkins and I. The cheque, to my immense relief, passed out of my hands. And a week later a christening mug was delivered to that lonely cottage on the lochside, a fine silver mug which made the eyes of Elizabeth Dallas gleam with pride, a mug which she handled reverently and fondly displayed to the child she held so tenderly.

Upon the mug was inscribed her little son's name, *Georgie Dallas*, and, below, this odd inscription: *What money can't buy.*

CHAPTER 7

WHILE my financial setback taught me a lesson I should never forget, it in no way diminished my professional self-confidence. I was "getting on fast," yet perhaps my progress was a trifle too speedy, perhaps I was acquiring too high an opinion of myself. There were moments when, in the face of my cheerful cocksureness, Dr. Cameron stroked his chin reflectively and stole a dry look at me. But if there was amusement in his eye, he masked it and said nothing.

One day I was working out a Fehling's test in the little room off the surgery. Known previously as "the back room," it had in a rush of scientific zeal been rechristened by me "the laboratory." This afternoon when Cameron indicated that he had a case to visit in Knoxhill, I had airily remarked:

"Righto! I'll tackle the tests in the lab."

Now I watched the blue liquid in the test tube bubble above the Bunsen and slowly turn brick-red—sugar, by Jove! Just as I'd suspected. Another smart piece of diagnosis.

I was interrupted by Janet who announced brusquely that I was wanted outside.

In the hall I found Will Duncan, the seedsman, fairly shivering with anxiety. It was the baby, he told me. Bad? Oh, yes, dreadfully bad! The little one didn't seem to get her breath, there was such a fearful whistling in her lungs, and it had come on so sudden, his wife was distracted, for Mrs. Niven, of all people, had said it was pneumonia.

I frowned. Part midwife, part nurse, part "layer-out" of the dead, waddling, interfering, wholly unqualified, the *sage femme* of the district, entrenched behind a portentous reputation—that was Bella Niven, and every doctor in the district hated her heartily.

"I'll be along at once," I said. "You get back and let them know I'm coming."

Young Duncan met me at the door of his little cottage, panting from his run home and desperately declaring:

"I've just had a word with Mrs. Niven, Doctor. The baby's no better, not a bit the better."

I went upstairs, and no sooner was I in the darkened room than I heard the baby's breathing; a shrill, half-whistling respiration which caught me up sharp.

Good Lord, I thought, there's something bad here sure enough! To the mother, who stood, distracted, by the newly lit coal fire, I said:

"Will you pull back the curtains, please, and let me have a little light?"

Bella Niven, arms folded on her formidable bosom, interposed:

"I ordered the curtains to be drawn. Don't you know the light frets the child?"

"I'm not a cat," I retorted sharply. "I can't see in the dark."

Nervously steering a middle course between her two advisers, young Mrs. Duncan went to the window. With an agitated hand she half drew back the curtains.

I bent over the cot. The baby's cheeks were flushed, she twisted and turned, whined pathetically. And through it all her breathing came and went—shrill, noisy, frightening.

I took the temperature—100°. Then with my stethoscope I examined her chest—a difficult job, for she simply would not keep still. She twisted and turned in the semi-darkness like a lively minnow in a pool. Nevertheless, there was no doubt about that breathing, it whistled ominously, a dry note, not exactly pneumonic and not pleuritic, something outside my experience. I was worried—really worried. I felt myself confronted by a most obscure disease. Sick children were so difficult, the very devil, in fact. If only they could talk—describe their symptoms. Abruptly I straightened myself from the cot. I was baffled, completely baffled.

As I began to put away my stethoscope, Mrs. Niven, with a narrowed eye, scornfully remarked:

“There’s little need for all your thumping and listening. The child has congestion of the lung.”

In spite of myself I began to feel intimidated.

“It’s not congestion,” I said—chiefly for the sake of contradicting her.

“You mean it’s worse,” she asserted instantly.

“The Lord save us!” whimpered Mrs. Duncan.

I turned to the frightened young mother, but Niven was upon me again before I could utter one word of comfort.

“Since you say it’s not the congestion, what do you say it is?” she demanded aggressively.

I racked my brains.

“I have my own opinion,” I said at last. “It’s the lung!”

“The lung!” muttered Mrs. Niven, casting up her eyes. “The lung, quoth he! As if I hadn’t known it was the lung the minute I stepped in this door. And what are we to do then, since you’ve come to the conclusion it’s the lung? Am I to stand here and watch the dearie whistle herself into her beloved grave, or am I to poultice her with linseed back and front, like I wanted to do a solemn hour since if I’d had my way?”

“Don’t poultice her till I tell you to poultice her,” I said savagely.

"Then what . . .?"

"Do nothing!" I cut her off and took Mrs. Duncan by the arm.

"I must have a second opinion. This is a difficult case. Keep calm. Don't worry. I'll be back in half an hour with Dr. Cameron."

"That's the wisest thing that's been said since he put foot in this room," Mrs. Niven remarked confidentially to the ceiling.

Cameron was at tea, munching a hot oatcake before a cheerful fire, when I rushed into the dining-room.

"Come away, man, come away," he cried hospitably. "You're just in time to catch the bannocks while they're warm."

I forced a smile; it was a poor attempt.

"No, thanks. I'm not minding about tea. I've a case—a bad case. Mrs. Duncan's baby at Lomond View."

"Yes?" Cameron shot me a quick, quizzical glance. "A fine stirring bairn. I brought her into the world eighteen months past. Ye know, this is a grand piece of cheese Janet's put before us. Come winter, I'm terrible fond of hot bannock and cheese to my tea. Try them, man, they go famously together."

I moved restlessly.

"I tell you I'm worried about this case."

"Tut, tut! That's not like ye at all, at all. You're not the man to let a case get the better of ye! Sit in and have a slice of cheese."

Under the delicate satire I coloured.

"Hang your cheese," I blurted out. "Can't you see I'm wanting you to come to Duncans' now?"

Cameron's lips twitched. Slyly he cut himself a further tiny sliver and nibbled it off the knife blade.

"Well! Well!" he said. "What's like the matter with the bairn?"

"A whistling lung."

Cameron raised his eyebrows.

"Never heard of that before."

"Then you'll hear it now," I retorted angrily. "It's got me beat. It's a pneumothorax maybe—you can hear the air whistling into the pleural cavity."

"Pneumothorax," repeated Cameron, as though the sound pleased him. "It's a braw name!" He brushed the crumbs from his waistcoat and got up. "Umph! We'd better see!"

The gig took us to Lomond View. It seemed as if I had spent the day tearing to and from the cottage. On the threshold of the sick room, Cameron remarked genially, "Well, well! What's all to do here?" His very presence soothed the air.

"I've poulticed the bairn, Doctor," whispered Mrs. Niven with a sharp look at me.

Cameron ignored her. He took a long look at the child, with his ear cocked to her breathing.

He spoke coaxingly. Then with a sure and gentle touch he lifted her out of the cot and, disdaining any stethoscope, laid his ear against her chest.

His head moved up, down, up again. He seemed almost to smile. He put the baby back to bed.

Then, for a moment he stood caressing his lantern jaw with his long, bony finger before he turned to Mrs. Duncan.

"My dear," he remarked blandly, "have ye such a thing as a hairpin in the house?"

"A hairpin?" she faltered, wondering if he had gone out of his mind or she, from panic, out of hers.

"Exactly," he reassured her. And when she fumblingly produced the hairpin he thanked her. "And now, lassie," he continued, patting her shoulder, "maybe ye'd leave us for a minute; we've something to discuss, my colleague and myself."

Half in fear, and half in wonder, little Mrs. Duncan let herself be propelled gently from the room.

"As for you, Mrs. Niven," said Cameron, in a different tone, "out ye go, too!"

"I'm as well here," she answered defiantly, "to lend ye a hand. Here I am and here I'll stay."

Cameron drew down his brows in a sudden scowl, black as a hanging judge.

"Out with ye!" he hissed. "And if ye don't, I'll take my boot to your big beam end."

It was too much even for the bold Niven. She quailed and in a moment she, too, was outside.

Cameron smiled at me. Then very confidentially he inquired, "By the way, lad, do ye know what a squeaker is?"

"A squeaker?" I echoed, confusedly.

"That was what I said—a squeaker."

Nonplussed, I stared at him.

"Well!"—Cameron reflected genially—"as ye don't know, I'll tell ye. A squeaker is a wee thing like a button that squeaks and whistles when ye blow it. A child's plaything, ye understand; ye'll find them in crackers and suchlike party trash. And since we're speaking of children, have ye ever noticed how mischievous they can be about the age of eighteen months? They'll stuff things in their mouths and in their ears—aye, even up their noses."

As he spoke he was bending over the cot with the hairpin in his hand. Swiftly and delicately the round end of the hairpin slipped up the baby's left nostril, then out again. And at the instant the whistling ceased.

"Good Lord!" I gasped.

"There's your pneumothorax," Cameron remarked mildly, holding the squeaker in his palm.

The baby smiled amiably at Cameron, curled itself into a ball, and began to suck its thumb.

I turned a dull red, mumbled shamefully a protestation of my own idiocy. And, stretching out my hand, I made to take the squeaker. But Cameron with a gesture slipped it in his own waistcoat pocket.

"No, no, lad," he declared kindly. "I'll take charge of this. And if ever I see ye getting a bit above yourself—then, sure as fate, out comes this squeaker!"



CHAPTER 8



THE Scots—I still stoutly maintain—are an emotional people and Dr. Cameron was, fundamentally, a sentimental man. But with this difference, shared by most of the northern race—he was not demonstrative. Any display of feeling he regarded as a sign of weakness, and one gruff word from him meant more than a score of impassioned speeches. Thus, he had given me no warning of what was in his mind when, one Sunday morning, he looked across the Britannia-metal coffee-pot as we sat at breakfast and remarked dryly:

“I find that I no longer need you as an assistant.”

There was a dead silence. I had, true enough, considered the possibility of leaving Cameron, but only in my own interest. This dismissal was a different matter, and I turned pale with mortification and surprise. Then, before I had recovered from the shock, his stern expression merged into a twisted smile.

“But I could very well do with you as a partner. How about going halves with me in the practice, lad? I’ll make the terms as easy as you please.”

The blood rushed back into my cheeks with such violence that my head swam. He went on:

“Take a few weeks to think about it. Talk it over with your friends and . . .”—his eyes twinkled as he got up from the table and went to the door—“with that young lady who is brave enough to be interested in you.”

It was a tremendous tribute he had paid me, and to this day I treasure my achievement in winning the regard of this hard-

headed and high-principled old country doctor, a man who said little but observed everything, who would certainly never have chosen for his associate one whom he did not like and esteem.

My first impulse was to accept warmly, but Cameron insisted I first of all seek advice. I went, accordingly, to my former chief, Professor Stockman, whose opinion I greatly valued. To my surprise, he strongly opposed my remaining in Tannochbrae. While in no way belittling rural practice, he declared that I should be foolish in the extreme to bury myself in a remote West Highland glen. These forcible words placed me in a dilemma. My heart told me that I should stay with Cameron, my head counselled me to leave him.

While I was in this state of indecision, winter took a last vile fling in a burst of abominable and atrocious weather. It snowed and rained, snowed again; then rained on top of that, until the roads were almost impassable with slush and mud. Wicked going and weary work it made for us. Pleurisy, pneumonia and every form of chill and congestion ravaged the countryside. My costume day after day was heavy boots, leggings and the thickest ulster in my wardrobe. Sleep became a luxury.

It was the worst time of all the year, when to work a busy, scattered practice was little better than slavery in its crudest form. And yet, perversely, the very torture of this treadmill inclined me to remain. How could I desert the old man at such a time?

Late one January night I stamped into the dining-room after a particularly killing day, tugged off my boots and leggings, drew on my soft slippers and sank into a chair. "Please God," I thought, with a little shiver, "I'll not be out again tonight." As I sat there by the fire, I sipped a bowl of scalding broth which Janet brought me.

Half an hour later Cameron came in, his figure bowed a little, his whole aspect utterly fagged. He stretched out his hands to the fire, while the steam rose from his damp clothing. A silence of sympathetic understanding linked us. Then, with a long expira-

tion of his breath, he nodded to me, went to the sideboard, poured out some whisky, added a little sugar, marched back to the fireplace and picked up the little kettle which sang there upon the hob. With an eye which thanked Providence for the small mercies of life, he smacked his lips and mixed some toddy. But, alas, just as Cameron gratefully raised the steaming brew to his lips, the phone bell rang.

He lowered his toddy untouched, and we both waited apprehensively. When Janet came in, her eyes fell not upon me, whose duty it usually was to take the night calls, but upon Cameron himself, and in her face there was genuine reproach.

"It's from Mr. Currie, of Langloan," she announced, with a baleful shake of her head. "They've been expecting you all day long"—pause—"and now they want to know if you're coming at all."

Cameron groaned. Then, for all his case-hardened imperturbability, he let out a heartfelt oath.

"The de'il dang me for an idiot! What on earth was I thinking of to forget Neil Currie? And me passed his very door twice!"

I well knew the misery of missing a call in the rush of the day's work and having to retrace weary steps to make good the oversight.

"Let me go," I urged. "You're absolutely dead-beat."

"Dead-beat or no," said Cameron, "I'm going. Neil will never be satisfied unless I show face myself."

"I'll send round for Jamie and the gig," exclaimed Janet.

"No," growled Cameron. "Jamie's worn out, and the beast's half-foundered. It isn't more nor a mile to Langloan. I'll just step there myself. I'll be there and back in no time."

In spite of my attempts to dissuade him, he had his way. Neil Currie was one of his oldest friends, a fellow member of the Anglers' Club, at present laid low by a bad attack of jaundice. Turning up his coat collar, he braced himself to the bitter wind and left the house.

I was not easy in my mind and, indeed, when Cameron returned

an hour later, it seemed as though my anxiety were justified. The old man was blue to the ears and completely exhausted. Nevertheless, he wheezed triumphantly:

"I think I've smoothed out that affair. I explained to Neil how it happened. For heaven's sake, don't let me forget to see him in the morning."

As he stood by the fire he coughed sharply, then remarked: "I think I'll get upstairs."

But when halfway to the door he pressed his hand to his side and took a quick breath.

"Dod!" he exclaimed. "It catches me here right enough."

Ignoring his protests, I got Cameron upstairs to his bedroom, helped him out of his clothes and into bed. Once there, he seemed better and thrust aside my offer to examine him. But he did not mind when I dosed him with hot toddy and quinine. I waited in the bedroom until he fell into restless sleep. I hoped that he would be fit again by morning.

But next morning Cameron was far from well. When I went in at six o'clock I found him flushed, fevered, breathing rapidly, and tormented by a short, suppressed cough. This time I was not to be put off. I carefully sounded his chest. There was no doubt about it. Cameron had lobar pneumonia, and he himself was aware of the fact, for, gazing at me with distressed yet quizzical eyes, he gasped: "The right lung, isn't it?" And at my silence: "Well, it seems I'm in for it this time, sure enough."

Confronted by this emergency, I telephoned Linklater's, the wholesale chemists in Glasgow, who also conducted a local medical agency. Through them I obtained a locum tenens, a temporary assistant—a raw Inverness youth named Frazer, who arrived early that same afternoon.

Keyed to a high tension, I put the fear of God in Frazer, deputed to him the surgeries and the outlying work. Then, rushing through my own cases with all possible speed, I devoted the remainder of my time to Cameron.

I realized only too well that there could be no immediate and spontaneous cure. In that era we knew nothing of the wonder drugs, of sulphanilamide, penicillin, and the other antibiotics which have reduced the mortality rate of lobar pneumonia by eighty-five per cent. Then, for nine to ten days that dread disease "ran its course," each day showing a steady deterioration in the patient's condition, until the crisis came.

Thus the task to which I gave myself with passionate intensity was to pull Cameron through these fateful days. I felt I would succeed, too, for despite his pain and discomfort he was alert and cheerful.

"Don't look so annoyed wi' me, man," he declared, with an attempt at humour. "It's a grand opportunity ye're havin' to observe how sickness makes the most impatient man behave."

I smiled an acquiescence I was far from feeling as I punched up the old doctor's pillows, then measured out his medicine. I looked round: the fire was burning cheerfully in the grate, the draught screen in position, the windows open at the top, the room ordered and fresh and airy. A nurse from Knoxhill stood by the foot of the bed, trim and competent, ready to anticipate Cameron's every want. Everything was being done and everything would be done, I thought grimly. I must get Cameron through—I must, I must!

In this fashion for the first three days all went smoothly and the condition ran a normal course. But on the fourth day, with alarming unexpectedness, my patient took a turn for the worse. As I read the sick man's temperature and felt his running pulse, I steeled myself to betray no anxiety; but underneath, my heart throbbed with a sudden fear. I redoubled my attentions. All that night and the following night I sat up with Cameron, making every effort to stem the ominous advancing tide.

But on the sixth day Cameron was definitely worse; and that night he tossed through long, sleepless hours. Accordingly, on the seventh day, with a heavy heart, I telephoned Dr. Greer in

Glasgow, one of the best-known medical specialists in the west of Scotland, and asked him to meet me in consultation.

In his unhurried, methodical way, Greer probed every aspect of the case. Afterwards, he was kind in what he said to me, agreeing with my diagnosis and treatment, but alas, far from reassuring. When pressed for an opinion he shook his head. Cameron, he said, was over sixty, and worn down by years of arduous exertions. Under the toxins of the pneumococci his strength had failed considerably and, more than that, he seemed now to offer little resistance to the malady. There was a definite breaking down of the blood cells and also involvement of the left lung—double pneumonia. He could do no more than urge me to continue the measures I was taking.

When Professor Greer had gone I was overcome by an insupportable feeling of wretchedness, recollecting all that I owed to Cameron. The memory of his kindness, affection and goodness rushed over me in a kind of agony.

The eighth day came without a shadow of improvement. Though I battled frantically to arrest the growing weakness of the sick man, it was useless. The old fighting quality, which had been so characteristic of Cameron, was finally extinguished. He lay passive on his pillow with half-shut eyes and could not rouse himself to take nourishment.

The ninth day was pregnant with fatality. All afternoon I sat by the sinking man, watching Cameron's strength ebb away under my very eyes. Never shall I forget that still cold winter twilight. Evening came, and with the falling dusk it seemed as if the mantle of death descended and hung above the enfeebled figure in the bed. Weakly Cameron turned his head and whispered, "No use, lad. It's all up with me this time."

Unable to reply, I clenched my hands until the nails bit into my palms. Violently I shook my head. But Cameron's eyes were already closed. . . . It was the end.

How long I sat there, in that silent room, I cannot tell. Janet

came and went. There was the glimmer of a candle. Then, from without, through the still and frigid air, came the slow tolling of the steeple bell.

Three days later the old doctor was buried in the village churchyard. Within the month his heirs—two nephews from a remote northern town—had sold the practice and the incoming man had taken over.

I was pressed by many people to remain, to set up in opposition to the new doctor, with Janet as my housekeeper, but, with Cameron gone, the appeal of Tannochbrae was finally extinguished.

I left silently, one winter morning, from the Junction station. The windswept platform was no more desolate than was my heart. Indeed, such desolation as now possessed me induced a mood of utter recklessness, linked to a crying need of tenderness. Gone now were all practical considerations. I sought out Mary who, having passed her last examination, was living with her parents in a pleasant country villa some twenty miles from Glasgow. Abruptly, I took both her hands in mine.

"Mary," I said, "I have no position, no prospects, and no money; in fact I'm thirty pounds in debt. I can't even offer you the barest pretence of a home. I'm quite sure your family consider me an irresponsible blackguard—and perhaps with reason. It all sounds hopeless, but we love each other, I know we can get along together, and I'm sure I can get some sort of job straight away. So will you marry me, quickly, without fuss, one day next week . . . and take what looks like a very long chance?"

She did not speak, not a single word, but I read her answer in the swift tightening of her grasp, in the quivering brightness of her dear and steadfast eyes.

CHAPTER 9

LATE that January afternoon, an ordinary young man in a new store suit and a pretty young woman wearing a dove-grey dress sat tightly holding hands and gazing with fixed intensity through the window of a dingy third-class compartment in the almost empty train labouring up the Rhondda Valley from Cardiff. All day long, after our wedding, my wife and I had been travelling from Scotland, and the final stage of our long journey to South Wales found us strung to a state of increasing tension at the prospects of beginning our life together in this strange, disfigured country.

Outside, a grey mist was swirling down between the black mountains which rose on either side, scarred by ore workings, blemished by great heaps of slag on which a few mangy sheep wandered in vain hope of pasture. No bush, no blade of grass was visible. The trees, seen in the fading light, were gaunt and stunted spectres. Darkness had fallen when the engine panted into Tregenny, the end township of the valley and the terminus of the line. We had arrived at last. Gripping our suitcase, I leaped from the train and helped my bride to alight.

We stood at the station exit, not knowing our way, depressed by the blurred and huddled aspect of the town, made up of ugly rows of miners' dwellings, interspersed with tin chapels and taverns, set between high dumps of pit refuse, beneath a pall of fog and smoke. A loud hooter sounded and squads of miners began to come off shift from the pithead. Dark, sallow fellows they were, grimed with sweat and coal dust, each with a tiny oil lamp fixed to the peak of his cap. Approaching one of them, I asked to be directed to the doctor's house. He stared at me, then broke into a wild torrent of Welsh, not a word of which was intelligible to me. Another responded in similar fashion. But at last we found a lad who understood our inquiry and who kindly

led us to our lodging, which, to our consternation, we discovered to be no more than two sparsely furnished rooms in a collier's cottage. As we arrived, we were greeted by a stream of dirty water sluiced from a tin bath through the side door.

The woman of the house, Mrs. Morgan, was perfectly civil but not effusive in her welcome. She showed my wife the bedroom upstairs and the few amenities provided by the kitchen, indicated that water came only from the outside well and that such toilet facilities as existed were confined to the back yard. Then she left us to ourselves.

"Well," I remarked, with false brightness, "it's not too bad."

"No, dear."

"And at least we'll be together."

"Yes, dear."

"But I must say," with a rush of indignation, "I can't see where their damned comfort comes in."

The advertisement in the *Lancet*, inserted by the Tregenny Coal Company, which had brought us at short notice to this outlandish spot, had promised the company's incoming medical officer not only remuneration at the rate of five hundred pounds per annum, but also what was pleasingly described as "comfortable living quarters."

Facing each other across the worn stretch of linoleum, chilled by the rickety furniture upholstered in wax cloth, by the thin, frayed curtains, the burst armchair, the sickly fern on its mottled bamboo stand, by this pinchbeck atmosphere of a fourth-rate boarding house, we exchanged wan and tremulous smiles. Then, observing a door which I felt might lead to an additional apartment, I tugged it open. With a frightful clatter there fell from a cupboard a score of empty whisky bottles left there by my predecessor, who, we learned afterwards, had drunk himself into delirium tremens. This final shock proved too much for my poor wife. Her nerve gave way completely; she sat down on the suitcase and burst into tears.

In such an emergency there was only one remedy—food. There were no restaurants in Tregenny, but on our passage from the station I had perceived a fish-and-chip shop, a type of eating place which, in my impecunious student days, I had frequented with pleasure.

The shop was warm and steamy, filled with the rich odours of frying fat and fish fresh from the pan.

Our supper, served on the bare boards, was, as I had fully expected, hot, savoury and satisfying—experience had taught me that where working men eat the food is usually good—and when we had consumed it, life seemed less complex, definitely rosier.

“I wonder should I go down to the company’s office and report.”

“You’ll do no such thing,” my wife said. “We’ve had a long, tiring journey. You’re going straight to bed.”

Sudden realization of the implications of these words, uttered purely in a spirit of maternal protectiveness, caused my wife to blush, but she added in a practical manner:

“At least, it’s a good hair mattress. And I saw that the sheets were freshly laundered.”

“Darling,” I murmured romantically, ignoring the fat Welsh cook, who between fries was watching us from behind the counter, “you are without question the sweetest, bravest girl in all the world. You could have married someone who would have given you all the comfort and luxury you’re accustomed to . . . a honeymoon at Monte Carlo, Florence, Capri. But no, against your parents’ wishes, you marry me, a pauper, let me tear you from the bosom of your family, from your lovely home, for this . . . this dump. But just wait, darling. I’ll make it up to you. I’ll be a success for your sake. . . . I’ll be rich, famous, the top specialist in Harley Street. And although we can’t be in France or Italy tonight, I promise my love and adoration will make up for it. Ah, dearest, tonight. . . .”

“Hey, mon, be you the new doctor?”

My rhapsody, so lyrical, so inane, was cut short by the abrupt

appearance through the swinging door of a sturdy, broken-nosed little man with a face which seemed tattooed, so seamed and pitted was it with tiny bluish scars. He wore a leather skullcap on his round cropped head and carried a safety lantern in his hand.

"Sorry-like to fetch you, Doctor, bach," he went on, when I had answered, "but they do want you at t'pit."

It was annoying to be disturbed, yet I drew at least some slight comfort from this official recognition of our arrival. I escorted my wife across the street to our lodging, told her I would be back in half an hour, then set off with my new friend, whose name was Rhys Jones. On the way he told me, in the tone of one long accustomed to hardship and disaster, that a man had been injured underground, that we must go down to aid him.

At the first-aid room in the colliery yard, Jones handed me a battered surgical bag, then conducted me to the shaft head where, beneath the winding gear, the iron cage stood waiting for us. We entered. As the gates clanged, he gave a signal and, before I could draw a breath, the cage dropped like a plummet, with sickening velocity, nine hundred feet into the depths of the earth.

At the bottom we drew up with a jerk. We emerged into a sort of vaulted cave, roughhewn and dripping with water, from which there gave off a series of tunnels. Along one of these tunnels my companion led the way, every few minutes drawing me aside into little safety niches while, with a rumble and a roar, a train of metal tubs conducted by men stripped naked to the waist thundered past, missing us, it seemed, by inches.

"Aren't we nearly there?" I asked, as we reached a steeper incline.

"Nay, mon," he answered. "T'face is two miles from the shaft. Takes us forty minutes to reach it."

Nine hundred feet beneath the surface of the earth, in a tiny burrow two miles from the sole exit to free air—a horrible claustrophobia attacked me, a constriction of my throat and chest. I had to fight to keep my head. Though I flattered myself on my



physical fitness, now I was gasping for breath in the humid, dust-charged air. Ignoring my half-hearted protests, Jones relieved me of the heavy bag as, turning off the main level, we entered a branch tunnel, not more than three feet high, indeed of such restricted dimensions that we had to crawl forward on our hands and knees. The bed of this jagged conduit was awash with running water.

My God, I thought to myself, this is where men work, toil for long eight-hour shifts, hacking and hewing the coal from the narrow and difficult seams, day after day, through boyhood, manhood, the prime of life, yes, even to old age—a lifetime spent in this troglodyte existence, and all this for a wage which barely keeps body and soul together.

Presently, we arrived at the coal face and here, succoured by the under-manager and three of his mates, lay my patient, flat on his back, pinned by a heap of debris. In a low voice the under-manager told me that they had been shot-firing to bring out the coal and due to a fault in the stratum the blast had undercut, bringing down masses of broken stone and leaving a great insecure ledge overhanging the cavity beneath. Not only was the injured man caught in the fall, but at any moment the entire roof, a hundred tons of solid rock, might cave in.

Although the manager's voice was steady, it held an unmistakable urgency. With a hurried glance at that tombstone overhead, I crept up to the trapped miner. His left leg was hopelessly mutilated, and so irretrievably wedged that he could not be moved an inch. Only one course was open: an immediate amputation below the knee.

The thought appalled me. The baleful prediction of my student days had come to pass, and I knew by this time only too well my lack of skill as a surgeon, or at least my limitations in that bold and delicate art, which demands a special co-ordination of mind, heart and hand it has never been my good fortune to possess. But now, fearful though I might be, there was no drawing

back. I slit away the tattered clothing with a pair of curved scissors and bared the mangled limb. I saturated the anæsthesia mask with ether. My patient was still conscious.

"I'll get you out of this," I whispered, with a confidence I did not feel. "Just breathe in and forget about everything."

When he was under the influence of the anæsthetic, I propped the ether bottle against his side, tightened the tourniquet, pulled on a pair of rubber gloves, picked up the knife and in a strained silence, having swabbed the knee with iodine, made the first incision.

There was no time for finicking—it was neck or nothing. Lying flat on my stomach under that low and pendant roof of rock, I worked like one possessed, shaping wide flaps, methodically clipping on the artery forceps one after another, cutting down to the bone. Then I reached for the saw. But as I did so there was a cracking sound, a fragment of stone detached itself from the roof and fell upon the container of ether, smashing the glass to fragments, flooding every drop of anæsthetic upon the ground.

I swore despairingly. But it was impossible to stop. At frantic speed I went through the bone and began the ligatures. The under-manager, with his eye on the cracking roof, kept urging me to greater haste. I slipped in two drainage tubes, made good the last internal sutures and started, with deep stitches, to sew up the skin flaps. As I threaded my needle for the last time I suddenly looked round and caught the injured man's dilated eye fixed strainingly upon me.

"Ye've made a fine job of it, Doctor, bach," he whispered from between his clenched teeth, "though I only saw you do the hint end of it."

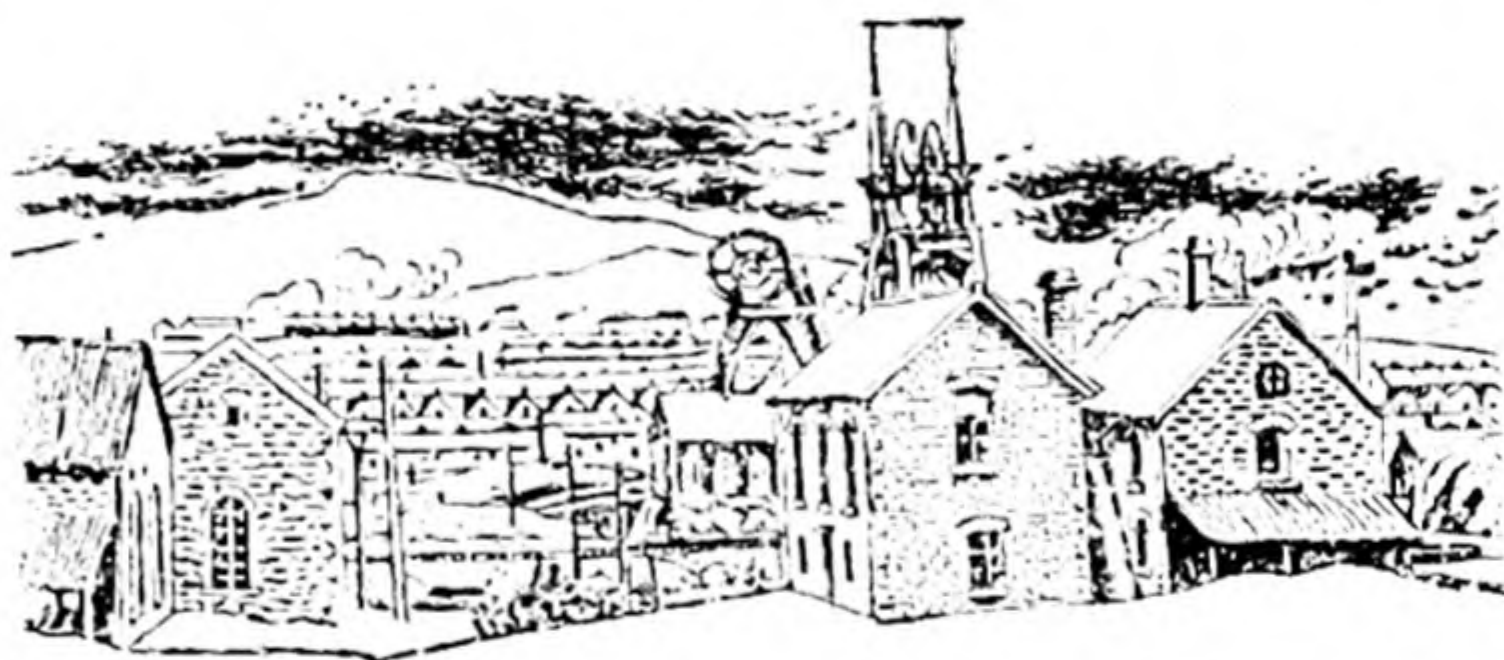
He had been out of the anæsthetic and watching me for a full five minutes.

As they pulled him clear of the undercut and laid him on the stretcher his eyes were still fastened upon me. He tried to speak

again. Instead, he fainted. And, indeed, I almost gave way also, for no sooner had we started back on our slow and painful passage to the shaft, than fifty paces back of us, with a final rending crepitation, the entire rock ceiling fell in.

We reached the surface at two in the morning, and to me the stars had never seemed brighter. There was no ambulance. We carried our patient on the stretcher to his home and there, aided by the district nurse, I worked over him until he had begun to recover from the worst symptoms of shock. Dawn was breaking when I finally reached our lodging. Heavens, I thought dizzily, as I let myself in, what a way for any man to spend the first night of his honeymoon!

CHAPTER 10



FIRST impressions of a place often prove misleading—but in this instance they showed a melancholy accuracy. No mining town can ever be a thing of beauty, and Tregenny was certainly, in the local idiom, a “rough shop.” Tregenny’s existence was centred in the mine. The little Tregenny Coal Company was not a rich concern, operating at a disadvantage in wet, narrow seams where the coal was of indifferent quality. Moreover, the mining industry in general had, at this period, lapsed into a slump, so it was inevitable that local conditions should be bad.

There was no hospital, no ambulance, no X-ray apparatus. The sanitation would hardly bear looking into. In such an environment medical practice could hardly conform to the more romantic traditions of the profession.

The company did its best by providing a doctor for the miners

and their families but, inevitably, the standard of men attracted to such an appointment was lamentably low. Thus in recent years Tregenny had seen an irregular coming and going of raw youngsters fresh from college, licensed apothecaries with quasi-medical degrees and, worst of all, a draggled succession of "dead beats," doctors who had failed elsewhere or fallen into disrepute.

Small wonder, then, that our arrival caused no commotion and our welcome was both chill and apathetic. Yet beneath their dark and upright dignity, the people were, at heart, warm and kindly. Once their distrust of strangers is overcome, the Welsh can be intensely hospitable. My conduct of that first case had created a favourable impression and, while still gazing at me askance, people began to wonder, hopefully, if they had "got a half-decent chap" at last.

Morning and evening I saw patients in the crowded surgery near the pit, until the walls sweated and the air was choked with the steam of damp bodies. Miners with beat knee, nystagmus, chronic arthritis, sprained and lacerated limbs. Their wives, too, and their children with coughs, colds and colics—all the minor ailments of humanity. Those patients who were more seriously ill I visited in their homes.

Despite handicaps and shortages, or perhaps because of them, it was worth-while work. My amputation case was making an admirable recovery. Alone in the village, with no other physician for miles around, I felt a queer pride in my responsibilities, a rising exultation in the hope and promise of the future.

In other ways, however, Tregenny was unquestionably grim. There was no social life, no means of entertainment, not even a cinema. My wife and I both loved the country and were used to long rambles together through woods, fields and meadows. Here, however, shut up in this narrow valley, hemmed in by the smeary blackness of the wasteland, it was impossible to escape to verdant pastures. In fact, that very colour, green—nature's own sweet tint—was something we never saw in all the monochrome

of drab Tregenny. At times this sense of being buried, far down in this swart cleft of the mountains, was singularly oppressive. But we were young, healthy and absurdly in love. We also had a sense of humour which enabled us to laugh at the deficiencies and oddities of our existence. . . . In brief, we were happy.

Our most intimate friend in this carbonaceous wilderness was the district nurse, Olwen Davies, a middle-aged woman who became especially dear to both of us. And since her history is one which merits consideration, I might perhaps anticipate events and recount it now in its entirety.

Olwen Davies was only twenty-five when, fresh from her hospital training course, she was appointed visiting nurse to the district of Tregenny. Her reception was as chilly as ours had been. Nevertheless, she threw herself enthusiastically into her work, walking in all weathers over the bleak mountain trails, visiting the sick, tending the few patients who appeared at the bare, simple dispensary provided by the rural board.

Towards the end of her first summer a sharp epidemic of enteric fever struck Tregenny. Despite opposition from the slack and incompetent company doctor, Olwen traced the source of infection to a polluted well and succeeded in having it sealed.

There was something of an outcry at such "interference" on the part of the young nurse. But no new cases of typhoid appeared, in record time the epidemic was confined and Olwen, going about her work, felt the tide of public esteem flow slowly towards her. No longer was she greeted with dark looks and hostile silences. The people opened their doors to her, and their hearts.

Then, at the end of that year, a great event took place: a local committee made her a present of a three-speed, all-weather bicycle. It cost the good people of the township no slight effort, for times were bad in the valley, but its worth to Olwen, freed now from the drudgery of tramping her daily ten-mile round, was inestimable.

It was on this same machine, now far from new but still sturdy

and serviceable, as she came to meet me on a case, that I first saw Nurse Davies. She was a tall, solidly built woman of forty-seven then, her figure buxom, her face mature. But there was a steady frankness, an ardour in her clear grey eyes that bespoke a sincere and earnest soul. Many times I found reassurance in her presence. Perhaps it was the way she had of standing at the bedside, of handing an instrument or a dressing, of murmuring encouragement when I was obviously in doubt.

Often in the midnight hours as we worked together in the cramped attic of a broken-down dwelling, fighting to save a human life, I marvelled at her fortitude and patience. At the pit head, when summoned for an accident, thanks to her indispensable bike she was usually there before me—calm, cheerful and courageous. Most laudable of all was the work which she had done in opening, on her own initiative, a clinic for the children and aged people of the township, and which she held every day in a room rented, and paid for, by herself.

She was no conventional saint. She enjoyed a cigarette with her coffee and, in later years, a glass of oatmeal stout. In a town of many chapels, she rarely went to church. Too busy, was her smiling excuse. Yet I never once heard her speak ill of anyone. She possessed a priceless fund of common sense and an instinct of resourcefulness which never deserted her. Upon one unforgettable occasion the current failed in an isolated cottage while I was performing an emergency appendectomy. In the sudden blackness I stood helpless. But she slipped outside and returned at once with a brilliant light by which the operation was successfully completed. It was her electric bicycle lamp.

That old black bicycle, it really seemed a part of her! When our vigil in the night had ended and she had brewed me a restoring cup of hot, strong coffee, she would nod a brisk good-bye and pedal back to her lodging beside her clinic. To tease her, I pretended to believe that she was, and would be all her life, geared to those inexorable wheels.

Often I wondered why she had never sought out a better position. The nurses with whom she had trained had all "got on"—indeed, one of them had recently been appointed matron of a great new hospital in Liverpool. When I read of this in the *Medical Journal*, I could not help remarking:

"You should have had that post. It would have suited you."

"No." Nurse Davies raised her eyes steadily to mine and smiled her quiet, generous smile. "I'm not much good at managing people and a bit rusty on surgical technique. I'm much happier, and a lot more use, careering around this old place."

One morning before breakfast as I was dressing, my landlady, Mrs. Morgan, came rushing to the bedroom in a state of agitation.

"It's Nurse Davies, Doctor. . . . She was biking to a case last night . . . out Blanethly way. A pylon had blown across the road. She ran smack into it in the dark. Lay all night in the wind and pouring rain before the men coming on day shift found her. They think her back is broken."

At her lodging, where they had taken her, I made a prolonged examination. Two of the lower spinal vertebræ were fractured, there was neither sensation nor power of movement in the lower limbs—a total paralysis. We carried her to the station where she was placed on a double mattress in the guard's van of the forenoon train for Cardiff. I went with her, and three hours later she was in the city infirmary.

Back in Tregenny we waited for news. At first it was doubtful that she would survive. Then came word of a series of operations, long and complex. Afterwards, weeks in plaster of Paris, massage, electrical therapy. Finally, the devastating verdict—it had all been in vain, she would never walk again.

The weeks went past. We had a new nurse now, a young probationer, who worked well enough on the district. But there her activities ceased—the clinic, which had been Nurse Davies' special charge, was not reopened. And here more than anywhere was the old nurse missed.

One afternoon, as I passed the disused room in Chapel Street I drew up short. I had thought I heard her voice. Instinctively I threw open the door. Then I saw something which made my heart turn in my breast.

There, in a wheel chair, her hair turned completely grey, bent a little, much thinner, her paralyzed legs covered by a rug, but still in her uniform, was the old district nurse. Surrounded by her patients, children mostly, she steered herself skilfully about the room. Motionless, I stood in the shadow. When the last patient left the room she had barely time to spin round before I went forward and clasped her hands.

"Nurse Davies . . . Olwen! You're all right."

She gave me her rare smile.

"Why not? Can't you see . . . I'm back at work"—her smile deepened—"and still on wheels!"

CHAPTER 11

AWET and dark December night the wind howled down the narrow valley among the scattered rows of houses, driving the rain against the window-panes and scouring the deserted streets in hissing gusts. When I had finished my last round, I came in, soaked to the skin, tired, utterly dispirited. It was one of those days when I cursed the fate that had brought me to Tregenny. I was, I told myself bitterly, no selfless altruist, no fond and fervent martyr in the cause of suffering humanity. And after three months in this dismal place, lost amidst the black Carmarthen mountains, I was beginning to feel that I had the worst end of the bargain. The place itself, less from drab ugliness than from its queer and unearthly detachment, was utterly foreign to me. There seemed, indeed, in the very air of this remote village a queer sense of unreality and superstition which grew upon one like a ghostly fantasy. Many of the people were friendly now, yet beneath the surface

strange currents ran, and depths existed that I could not plumb; I felt, almost with a thrill of fear, the presence of the supernatural.

I flung myself into bed that night, bone-weary, praying that I would not be disturbed, and fell into a heavy sleep.

The faint whirring of a bell half-awakened me. On and on it went, so damnably insistent it would not let me be. Still dazed with sleep, I fumbled in the darkness and took up the telephone receiver beside my bed. A woman's voice spoke instantly, but from a far way off.

"Come at once, Doctor. Come to Evan Evans' house by Ystfad."

I groaned.

"I can't possibly get up to Ystfad tonight."

"But you must come tonight, Doctor, bach. . . ."

"Who are you?"

"I am Evan Evans' wife. And my daughter is very ill."

"I'll come in the morning, I tell you."

"Oh, no, indeed, you must come now. Please, Doctor, you must come now."

The pleading, the pitiful urgency of the voice persuaded me. I dropped the receiver, lay for a moment collecting my scattered wits, then I rose, tumbled into my damp clothes and picked up my bag.

Outside the rain had ceased, but the wind was high and bitter cold, driving dark clouds across an icy moon. The mountains rose in wild and haggard majesty upon a scene so starkly desolate that instinctively I shivered and drew my scarf about me. As I stumbled along the broken mountain road that led to Ystfad, five miles up the highest peak in that rugged chain, I began to recollect a vague story of this man, Evan Evans, whose wife had called me out.

Evans had lived at one time in Tregenny itself, a respected and prosperous man, owner of the snug little "outcrop" pit known as Tregenny No. 1. But one day a dispute had arisen between himself and the main Tregenny Coal Company. The question was negligible, even trivial, but Evans was a violent man. The dispute

became a quarrel and then a lawsuit. Evans lost his suit. Immediately he took it to appeal. He lost his appeal. Burning with resentment, he took it to a higher court. Again he lost. And so the process was continued until finally, his money dissipated, his colliery sold above his head, he had retired, a warped and ruined man, to a forsaken house on the mountainside. There he had remained for years, hating and avoiding his fellow men, perhaps a little crazy from his misfortunes, until he had become an almost legendary figure. He guarded his seclusion jealously, but often in the autumn evenings he might be seen, a dim, gaunt figure, shooting the wild snipe on the ridges, and sometimes at night he would gallop his pony along the moonlit summit, wildly, as though he rode against the world.

After a journey which seemed unending, I reached the lonely house at last. Large and rambling, adjoined by a huddle of out-buildings, it was a gloomy and dilapidated barrack. Not a glimmer of light was visible as I trudged up the narrow path, and no sound broke the universal stillness but the remote hooting of an owl. I pulled the bell. There was no answer; only a furious barking of dogs. After a long delay the door was opened by an oldish woman in a dingy black dress and shawl. While she peered at me with a frightened, hooded face two hounds skulked about her heels, showing their teeth and growling. Annoyed by this reception, I pushed past her through the hall and into a large stone-flagged room that seemed half kitchen and half parlour. Here my eyes fell at once upon a young girl who lay, unconscious, wrapped in blankets, upon a horsehair sofa beside the fire. Beside her, bowed in an attitude of heavy watchfulness, sat a gaunt and powerful man. His physique was, in fact, tremendous—six foot six he must have stood when his great, wasted frame was raised erect. He was in his shirt sleeves, wore rough knickerbockers and no shoes, and his air of general disorder was heightened by a mane of greying hair which fell in tangles about his head. He might have been fifty-five. He was Evan Evans without a doubt.

He did not hear me enter, but as I heaved my bag upon the table, he swung round with alarming suddenness, his eyes glittering in his dark face with such wildness that I was fairly taken aback.

"What do you want?"

He spoke thickly, with a husky intonation, and I thought at first he was drunk. I answered with as much moderation as I could muster:

"I'm the doctor. If you step aside, I'll have a look at the patient. She looks pretty bad."

"Doctor!" He repeated the word. Though he did not raise his voice, an indescribable menace filled it. "I won't have any doctors here. I won't have anybody here. Get out. D'you hear me? Get out!"

His manner was formidable in the extreme, yet a sense of real indignation sustained me.

"You're crazy to talk like that. Your daughter is seriously ill. Don't you want me to try to help her?"

He winced when I said that and darted towards the sofa a furtive glance in which there was a sudden and almost piteous fear.

"I don't trust doctors," he muttered sullenly. "Not for my daughter. I don't trust anyone."

Silence in that strange and barren room. What was there to be done? I glanced towards the woman, who stood in mortal terror by the doorway, her hands clasped weakly upon her breast. I presumed that she had shot her bolt in summoning me against her lord and master's will. No further help could be expected there. Only one course seemed likely to succeed. With a set face I moved to the table and picked up my bag in the pretence of leaving.

"Very well. If your daughter dies, you know who is responsible."

For a moment he remained motionless, clenching and unclenching his fingers, his cheek twitching indecisively. When my hand was almost on the door, with a sobbing breath that seemed torn from his great chest, he cried:

"Don't go. If she's bad like you say, you better look at her."

I came back slowly and knelt down and examined the patient. She was older than I had imagined, about eighteen, and despite the coma which held her, there was in her slender immaturity a strange, uncared-for beauty. Her skin was burning to the touch. I was puzzled as to the cause of her infection until I saw the faint but dusky swelling behind her left ear—acute suppurative mastoiditis. When I had made quite sure I turned to Evans.

"You ought to have sent for me days ago."

"It is only a blast," he muttered, using the local idiom for inflammation. "We have used goose grease and bran poultice. I am after fetching leeches tomorrow from the lake by Penpeoch. She will be better then."

"She will be dead then."

His jaw dropped and his gaunt cheeks turned bone-white. He reached out to the wall as if for support. His eyes never left my face. At last he moistened his lips.

"Is that the truth?"

"Look here, Evans"—I spoke vehemently in my effort to convince him—"you must understand me. The whole of this mastoid bone is filled with pus. Unless it is opened up and drained it will break through the skull into the brain. You know what that means. If we don't do something at once, your daughter has about six hours to live."

I saw his jaw clench. "Do it then. She must get better."

He said no more, yet I knew that he was trusting me against his will only because necessity and fear compelled him. And, at a sudden thought, a thrill of apprehension shot through me. I had persuaded him to let me operate. What would happen if I failed?

But there was no time to dwell on this reflection. I opened my bag, laid out my instruments, anæsthetic and dressings, prepared two basins of carbolic solution, then between us we lifted the patient, a slight burden, on to the bare wooden table. The pungent odour of the anæsthetic rose into the smoky air.

The light, a glaring oil lamp held by Evans, was atrocious, the conditions unimaginably bad. As my first incision slit up the puffy skin behind the ear, I realized that I had to make only one slip, one single error of judgment, and I would penetrate, fatally, the lateral sinus of the brain. I worked by a kind of instinct, and through it all painfully conscious that the wild eyes of Evan Evans were bent upon me. I was down to the bone now, the delicate bone of the skull. Was there no pus after all? Slowly, I went deeper, and deeper still. And then, when I felt I must surely pierce the dura into the very cerebrum itself, a heavy bead of pus welled up through the spongy cells.

Hurriedly, I cleared out the pent-up matter, then washed the cavity with antiseptic, packed it with iodoform gauze. Quickly, quickly, I finished the work. Five more minutes and the patient was back upon her improvised bed, breathing quietly and deeply, as if asleep. Her pulse was stronger and a better colour tinged her skin. I was convinced that, free of the morbid centre of infection, with her healthy young constitution, she would recover.

As I packed my bag, filled with that sense of achievement which comes on rare occasions to the long-suffering general practitioner, I threw a look at Evans. I noted that the sullenness was gone from his dark face. I could see that he was rent by a new emotion—gratitude. I said briefly and with grim triumph:

“She’ll do now.”

He did not answer for a minute; then he muttered:

“Yes, indeed; she does look better.”

Somehow at the sight of him there, with his great dangling hands and his troubled brow, my anger died. He was so deeply affected by the prospect of his daughter’s recovery. And in a milder manner, nodding towards the woman of the house, who had at that moment taken a chair by the bed, I said:

“One thing you mustn’t forget. You owe it to your wife for asking me to come.”

His sombre eyes followed mine in complete bewilderment.

"I do not understand. That is Gwynneth, our servant." He added, "She can't speak English—only Welsh."

I stared at him.

"But, man alive," I expostulated, "don't you know that's how I got the call? She telephoned me to come here."

He gazed at me wonderingly.

"There is no telephone here. Nor for miles by here."

One glance convinced me that he spoke the truth. My head reeled. I faced him dizzily.

"Good Lord, don't you realize that your wife begged me to make this call? She spoke to me this very night. Do you hear me? I asked her who she was. She told me plainly that she was your wife."

He flushed darkly and, towering above me, raised his clenched fist. Then with a great effort he mastered himself.

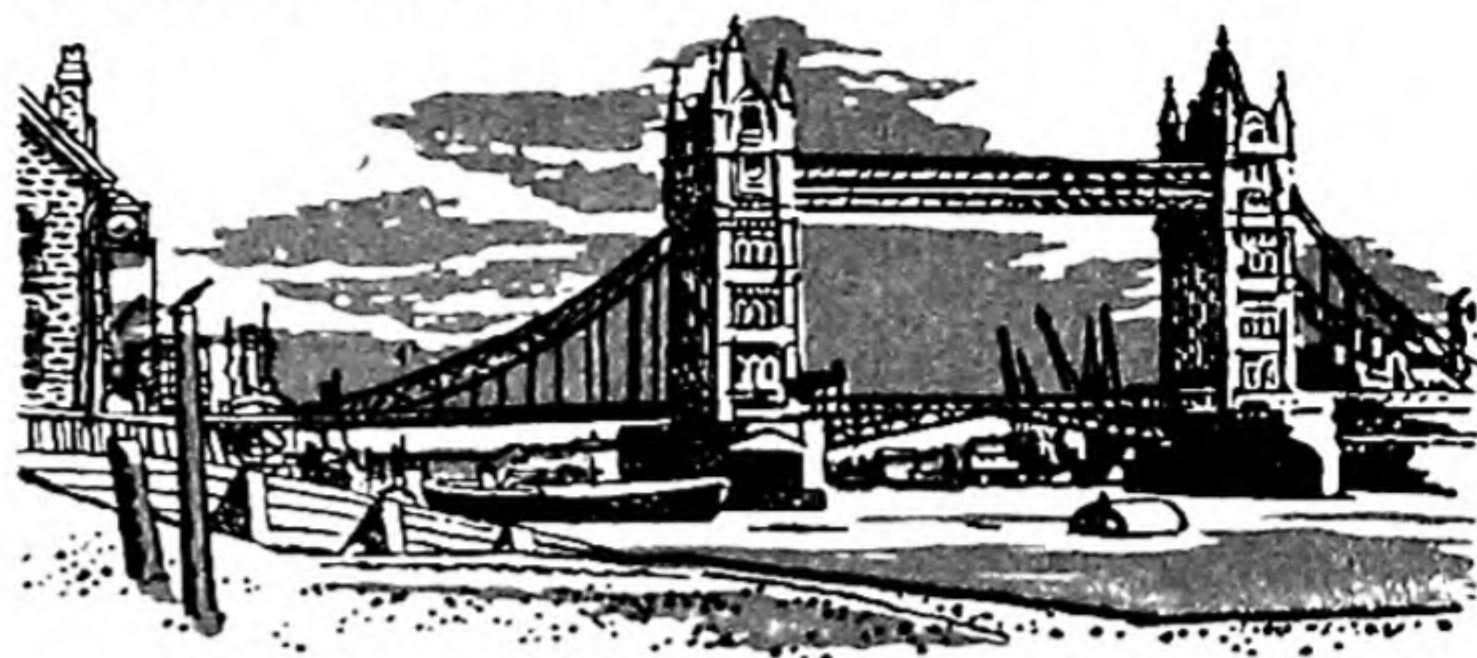
"You don't know about my wife." He broke off, his wild eyes searching my startled face, then said with a sobbing cry: "Haven't they told you it happened . . . because I wouldn't have a doctor . . .? She died in this room five years ago."

I WISH I might end this incident on an eerie note of mystery. I should then receive many letters of appreciation from my spiritualist and crystal-gazing friends. Alas, my veracity compels me to record the truth, which I learned shortly afterwards.

Evans' daughter had a solitary friend, a woman who knew the family's tragic history, knew also that the girl was desperately ill and, who, taking her courage in her hands but disguising her identity lest Evans should find her out, had at the last moment put a call through in the name of Evans' wife.

She was the switchboard operator on the Tregenny telephone exchange.

CHAPTER 12



TIME was fleeting—days, weeks, and months—and I was getting nowhere. In the first flush of my enthusiasm I had promised my darling wife—although I did not use this term of endearment when her efforts at Welsh cooking made me dose myself with bicarbonate of soda—I had promised her riches, a house in Harley Street, and, if I recollect correctly, a villa on the Mediterranean. And here we still were, plodding along, trying to save a little money, never “getting out of the bit,” as the Scots say, still buried alive in these wretched mountains. I chafed, used many strong words, and applied for many situations, all without avail. Then, one memorable day, I burst in with a letter.

“We’re leaving. At the end of the month.” I handed her the letter. It was from the secretary of the Medical Aid Society in the neighbouring valley of Tredegar, offering me a post as doctor to the society. The salary was only slightly more than I was now being paid, but what caught the eye and made the pulse bound was the fact that a house—a real house—was included in the terms of the appointment.

We remained long enough to enable the company to secure another doctor; then, packing our few belongings into a borrowed truck, we took leave of Olwen Davies and of our landlady, Mrs. Morgan, climbed in beside the driver and set out over the high ridges for our new home.

Tredegar was a colliery town, too, but it was trim and clean and set on the verge of still unspoiled hill country. There were several decent stores, a public library and—one could scarcely be-

lieve it—a town hall where moving pictures were shown twice a week.

The little house into which we moved was stoutly built of red brick with a gabled roof. Standing in a wild patch of garden beside a clear mountain stream spanned by a wooden bridge, it was appropriately named "The Glen."

This was a time of great happiness. Our small domain was most simply furnished, but we had both pride and comfort in it. On the cold nights we sat before our blazing fire—coal was plentiful and free—reading, talking, arguing. We had tremendous arguments. Unbelievably, my wife's cooking improved. She even revealed herself as a skilful gardener, raising tulips and noble hyacinths in the tiny glassed porch of the house.

For me there was plenty of interesting work. Under the local medical aid plan, all the miners paid a small weekly contribution to the society and were entitled thereby to free medical treatment for their families and themselves. This scheme can be regarded as the foundation of the plan of socialized medicine which was eventually adopted by Great Britain. Aneurin Bevan, later Minister of Health, who was mainly responsible for the national project, was at one time a miner in Tredegar, and here the value of prompt and gratuitous treatment for the worker was strongly impressed upon him.

There is certainly virtue in the scheme, but it also has its defects, of which the chief one, in Tredegar, was this—with complete *carte blanche* in the way of medical attention the people were not sparing, by day or night, in "fetching the doctor." In a word, the plan fostered hypochondriacs and malingerers.

My real invalids were numerous, but I had also to deal with the other sort. There was one hale young woman who lay in bed all day long and insisted on being visited, in the belief that she was consumptive—an *idée fixe* which no amount of argument could dispel. Many of the old-time miners affected the symptoms of nystagmus and beat knee, occupational diseases which entitled

them to a pension and, as they were adept at what was known as "swinging the lead," they sometimes succeeded in confusing me.

At first I was conciliatory towards such cases, but soon my patience wore thin and I developed a brusqueness which would have pleased that master of invective whose "Dammit to hell" had so often resounded in the cottages of Tannochbrae. On one occasion, at two in the morning, I was routed out, dog-tired, to see an old woman who, when I entered her room, exclaimed from her comfortable bed: "Oh, Doctor, Doctor bach, I cannot stop yawning." At which I glared at her and, as I made for the door, replied over my shoulder in broad Scots: "Then shut your blasted mouth!"

In my medical knowledge I was progressing steadily, making friends among my patients and, at the cost of a few humiliations, learning that I did not quite know everything. The chief doctor of the district, Dr. Davies, was not only a highly skilled physician, with several exclusive London diplomas, but a brilliantly successful surgeon as well. When he consulted with me over a difficult or serious case, often he differed, in the kindest manner, yet authoritatively, with my diagnosis.

After such interviews I would sit all evening, grinding my teeth, muttering invectives against my worthy superior. Then suddenly I would jump up. "Damn it all, he's right and I'm wrong. It *was* t.b. meningitis, and I should have spotted it days ago. I know nothing, absolutely nothing, but I will—I tell you I will!"

To my audience of one, knitting sedately on the other side of the fireplace, this might well have seemed a natural pique, soon to be passed over and forgotten. But no, I was in dead earnest. Davies had shown me my limitations; I knew I should never progress until I had overcome them.

Presently, to my wife's surprise, there began to arrive at "The Glen" a succession of large crates which at first sight looked as though they might contain interesting articles like new sheets or table linen or a set of dinner china (which she badly needed), but which revealed nothing more exciting than dozens of large,

thick and horribly abstruse-looking medical textbooks. Not having enough spare cash to purchase the books, I had joined the library of the Royal Society in London—in fact, it looked as though the entire library now were here, and it was only the beginning.

Now, every night when I came in from my eight o'clock surgery, I sat down before these books. Often, after a punishing day's work, I was so weary I could scarcely keep my eyes open. But with relentless determination I forced myself to study, often reading until one o'clock in the morning.

After several months it became necessary for me to put in some practical work in biochemistry. The nearest laboratory was in the Health Department of Cardiff, more than fifty miles away. I applied to the secretary of the Medical Aid Society for four hours off duty on Thursday afternoons and when this request was granted I departed every week on my recently acquired second-hand motorcycle for the distant city. By making the journey at breakneck speed, I could secure two full hours in the laboratory before returning to my evening surgery.

Of course, neither my wife nor I realized in the slightest the craziness of my project, which was to take no less than three major postgraduate degrees. For a city practitioner commanding the expert teaching and highly technical resources of the great hospitals and universities, this constitutes a formidable enterprise, in which the average failures are more than seventy-five per cent. For an overworked colliery assistant, equipped only with borrowed books, prepared by no more than a few hasty dashes to a provincial laboratory, the thing was surely an impossibility.

I shall never forget the wet and windy day on which I departed for London to sit the examinations, nor the pessimistic bulletins which I felt obliged to send home during the ensuing week. It is a strange contradiction in my character that, despite the confidence which sustains me during months of effort, the actual test of that effort finds me dispirited and hopeless. My brain was inactive,

almost dull. I felt that I knew nothing. Indeed, when I began the written part of the examination, which was held at the College of Physicians, in Trafalgar Square, I found myself answering the papers with a blind automatism. I wrote and wrote, never looking at the clock, filling sheet after sheet, until my head reeled.

After the written papers the practical and viva voce parts of the examination began, and I was more afraid of these than anything which had gone before. There were perhaps thirty other candidates, all of them men older than myself, and all with an unmistakable air of assurance and position. When I compared the charming manners, immaculate attire and obvious standing of the candidate placed next to me with my own provincial awkwardness, I felt my chances of favourably impressing the examiners to be small indeed.

My practical, at the South London Hospital, went well enough. My case was one of bronchiectasis in a young boy of fourteen, which, since I had met this condition in my practice, was a piece of good fortune. I felt I had written a sound report. But when it came to the viva voce my luck seemed to change completely. The "viva" procedure at the College of Physicians had its peculiarities. On two successive days each candidate was questioned, in turn, by two separate examiners. If at the end of the first session the candidate was found inadequate, he was handed a polite note telling him he need not return on the following day. Faced with the imminence of this fatal missive, I found to my horror that I had drawn as my first examiner a man I had heard spoken of with apprehension, Dr. Maurice Gadsby.

Gadsby was a youngish man with a brilliant medical reputation. Recently elected to his Fellowship, he had perhaps less tolerance than the older examiners. Somewhat to my surprise, he greeted me, repeated my name several times, then demanded:

"Are you Richard's younger brother? Dick was at Cambridge with me, you know."

When I confessed, reluctantly, that I had no brother, he was plainly disappointed. He inspected me through his monocle.

"Were you at Cambridge?"

"No, sir."

"The other shop?"

"What shop, sir?"

"Oxford, of course."

"No, sir."

"Then what university?"

"Glasgow."

A hollow, devastating silence. He did not deign to comment but, with a lift to his brows, placed before me six slides. Five of these slides I named correctly, but the sixth I could not name. It was on this slide that Gadsby concentrated, with all the contempt of one to whom the mere mention of a Scots university was almost obscene. For five minutes he harassed me on this section—which, it appeared, was the ovum of an obscure West African parasite—then languidly, without interest, he passed me on to the next examiner, who was none other than Lord Dawson of Penn, Physician to the King.

I crossed the room with a pale face and a heavily beating heart. All the inertia I had experienced at the beginning of the week was gone now. I had an almost desperate desire to succeed. But I was convinced that Gadsby would fail me. I raised my eyes to find Lord Dawson contemplating me with a friendly, half-humorous smile.

"What's the matter?" he asked, unexpectedly.

"Nothing, sir," I stammered. "I think I've done rather badly with Dr. Gadsby—that's all."

"Never mind about that. Have a look at these specimens. Then just say anything about them that comes into your head."

Dawson smiled encouragingly. He was a handsome, fair-complexioned man of about sixty with a high forehead and a long, humorous upper lip masked by a cropped moustache. Though

now perhaps the second most distinguished physician in Europe, he had known difficulties and sharp struggles in his earlier days when, coming from his native Yarrow, he had encountered prejudice and opposition in London. As he gazed at me, without seeming to do so, he could not but observe my ill-cut suit, the soft collar and shirt, the cheap tie, above all, the look of strained intensity upon my serious face, and it may have been that memories of his own youth came back to him. He nodded encouragingly as I stumbled unhappily through a commentary upon the specimens.

"Good," he said, as I concluded. He took up another specimen—it was an aneurysm of the ascending aorta—and began in a companionable manner to interrogate me. His questions gradually became wider and more searching in their scope, until finally they came to bear upon a recent specific treatment by the induction of malaria. But, opening out under his sympathetic manner, I answered well.

Finally, as he put down the glass jar, Dawson remarked:

"Can you tell me anything of the history of aneurysm?"

"Ambroise Paré," I answered, and my examiner had already begun his approving nod, "is presumed to have first discovered the condition." Lord Dawson's face showed surprise.

"Why 'presumed'? Paré *did* discover aneurysm."

I reddened, then turned pale as I plunged on:

"Well, sir, that's what the textbooks say. But I happened to be reading Celsus, brushing up my Latin, when I definitely came across the word *aneurismus*. Celsus knew aneurysm. He described it in full. And that was a matter of fifteen centuries before Paré!"

There was a silence. I raised my eyes, prepared for kindly satire from His Majesty's physician. Decidedly he was looking at me with a queer expression, and for a long time he was silent.

"Doctor," he exclaimed at last, "you are the first candidate in this examination hall who has ever told me something original, and something which I did not know. I congratulate you."

I turned scarlet again.

"Just tell me one thing more—as a matter of personal curiosity," he concluded. "What do you regard as the main principle—the, shall I say, basic idea which you keep before you when you are exercising the practice of your profession."

There was a pause while I reflected desperately. At length, feeling I was spoiling all the good effect I had created, I blurted out:

"I suppose—I suppose I keep telling myself never to take anything for granted."

"Thank you, Doctor. . . . Thank you very much."

A few minutes later I went downstairs with the other candidates. At the foot of the stairs a liveried porter stood with a little pile of envelopes before him. As the candidates went past he handed an envelope to each of them. The candidate walking out next to me tore his open quickly. His expression altered; he said quietly, with impeccable good form:

"It would appear I'm not wanted tomorrow." Then, forcing a smile, "How about you?"

My fingers were shaking. I could barely read. Dazedly I accepted congratulations. My chances were still alive. I walked down to an A.B.C. teashop and treated myself to a double malted milk. I thought tensely, "If I don't get through now, after all this, I'll—I'll walk in front of a bus."

The next day passed grindingly. Barely half of the original candidates remained, and it was rumoured that out of these another half would go. At last it was over. At four o'clock in the afternoon I came out of the cloakroom, spent and melancholy, pulling on my coat. Then I became aware of Dawson of Penn standing before the big open fire in the hall. I made to pass. But Dawson, for some reason, was holding out his hand, smiling, speaking to me, telling me—telling me that I was now a Member of the Royal College of Physicians.

Dear God, I had done it! I had *done* it! I was alive again, gloriously alive. I dashed down to the nearest post office, bumping and

cannoning through the crowds, missing the wheels of taxis and omnibuses, racing to telephone news of the miracle back home. But no, some latent dramatic instinct made me hold things a little longer in suspense. Instead of the full, effusive message I had planned, I sent simply a brief wire asking my wife to come at once to London . . . no more than that curt command. She obeyed, fearing the worst, expecting to find me sick in hospital, perhaps on the verge of suicide. I met her at Victoria Station, tense and pale, with a dreadful glitter in my eye. Then I smiled and hugged her, gave her the incredible news, blatantly assured her that we were already on the way to Harley Street.

How good life seemed at that moment! How wonderful to share this joy with one so deeply loved! At first neither of us could speak; then we both started to talk at once. I crowded her into a taxi, whirled off to the Savoy. We celebrated recklessly on a seven-course spread; went on to a musical comedy; then to a champagne supper at the Café Royal, from which we emerged in a state of such sublime elation that the very pavements danced and swayed beneath our feet. We were both exhausted when, late the next evening, we reached the clear cold air of our mountain village and once again saw, under the high vault of heaven, the calm and reassuring stars.

CHAPTER 13

IT WAS not without some pangs of regret that we prepared to leave Tredegar. For three years now we had lived in the town. Here we had really taken up the yoke of married life, here our first child had been born.

The work which I had done might not rank high in the social or professional scale. Yet I had made many friends among the miners and officials of the surrounding collieries. Always at Christmas I received evidence of their regard in a host of homely pres-

ents—a couple of ducks or chickens from one, a print of fresh butter from another, a hand-tufted rug from a third.

There was a quality in this gratitude which moved me profoundly—something which went deep down to the very roots of life. Then why should I be leaving? Most of my classmates at the University had already settled down permanently in steady provincial practices. Alas, in me the urge to move forward was not to be denied.

LONDON in springtime captivated us from the first. Could anything be more enchanting for two people who had never before been there in that delicious season? Against the azure sky the outline of the city stood clear and glittering, crowned majestically by the dome of St. Paul's. The Thames, sparkling in the sunshine, glided beneath its graceful bridges. In Kensington Gardens, where well-dressed children trotted beside proud, bestreamered nannies, the lilacs and pink chestnuts were blooming around the statue of Peter Pan. Throughout the West End, in Piccadilly, Bond Street and Mayfair, the fashionable throng paraded. Soon, in the warm dusk, open landaulets would purr softly through the streets, bearing to the ballet, to the opera, dark handsome gentlemen in evening dress, with lustrous ladies in low-cut gowns. And we, yes, we were part of all this gorgeous, this glittering parade. . . .

It was wonderful indeed, yet that first year in London was marked by much hardship and by an intensity of purpose which never for a moment relaxed. After many weeks of searching—while our small capital dwindled—for a suitable practice that was for sale, I found an elderly practitioner with an excellent reputation who wished to retire and was willing to accept a small amount down, the balance to be paid quarterly out of receipts. The practice was in Bayswater, a rather run-down quarter given over to boarding-houses, but very near the best residential districts. The doctor's residence was included in the sale.

For months it was an uphill struggle. Winter came, and I had

never known one so desperately cold. A poisonous yellow London fog penetrated everywhere, making one cough continually, piercing the marrow of one's bones. Our waterpipes froze, then burst, flooding the basement, turning the kitchen into a swamp. Except for a gas fire in the consulting-room, we could afford no heating in the house at all. Going to bed at night, we dressed up in all our warmest clothes, as though for a polar expedition; then, for the look of things, put our pyjamas on top.

Even in my assistantship at Tredegar we had lived better. Then we were always sure of a blazing fire and a hot meal. Now, more often than not, we had neither. All our small receipts seemed consecrated to paying off our quarterly obligation.

We ate infrequently and only the cheapest kinds of food. How well do I remember coming in, fagged—less with work than anxiety—and sitting down to a dish that we were sick of. "What kind of doctor am I?" I would mutter. "Is nobody ever sick in this part of town?" More often than not, however, I would begin to eat silently, having first glanced across at my wife. "Have you had your milk?" Yes, she was supposed to drink milk, for on top of all this worry, our second son was due—and in truth he appeared in about three months.

By keeping our sense of humour and laughing off our trials and discouragements we managed to survive. And it was wonderful when the tide gradually turned and began, vigorously, to flow our way. It is true that I worked desperately hard. To attain a particular objective, one must offer unsparingly the sum total of one's capabilities—and in these first twelve months I did not take a single half-day's holiday. Yet I must admit that good fortune had its part in our ultimate success. I was lucky to make friends with the policeman on point duty in our neighbourhood, who got me many a useful fee for casualty work, and with the proprietor of the neighbourhood chemist's shop, who often sent along customers who had asked to be "recommended" to a good doctor.

A growing reputation is a thrilling, tingling tonic for the strug-

gling practitioner. Instead of sitting chafing, waiting for patients to arrive, the entire day now seemed too short for fulfilment of the increasing demands made upon me. As though this were not enough, an event occurred which must surely have been arranged by a benevolent Providence.

Late one November evening, I answered the door-bell to find a young maidservant in a breathless panic of agitation. Her mistress, Mrs. Arbuthnot, at No. 5 Palace Gardens, had taken poison. The maid had run for the family doctor only to find that he was away from home. Would I, in Heaven's name, come at once? Within four minutes we were at a small but handsome flat. In the bedroom, collapsed on the old-fashioned brass bedstead and quite unconscious, was a fragile little old woman in a lace nightgown. Upon the bedside table were two bottles of medicine, identical in size and shape: the one an obvious bismuth stomach mixture marked "One tablespoonful as required"; the other, dark blue in colour and bearing a scarlet label: "The Liniment. Poison. Not to be taken internally."

Little imagination was needed to deduce what had happened: the old lady, falling asleep, had felt a twinge of indigestion, had reached drowsily for a dose of the palliative mixture, had mistakenly swallowed a portion of the lethal liniment. But at that moment there was no time to dwell on theories. The old lady was almost gone, the pulse a mere flicker in her slender wrist. But what was the poison? I must decide instantly. The fixed, dilated pupils, that dry flushed skin, the injected eyeballs and fluttering heartbeats suggested one thing—belladonna—a supposition partly borne out by the greenish colour and sickly smell. Now belladonna is a powerful depressant which, acting through the vagus nerve, paralyses the respiratory centre in the brain. Already my patient had begun to gasp convulsively. It must be belladonna . . . yet . . . on the other hand, there were at least six other diliriant narcotics which could produce the same effect.

Well—I must risk it. Quickly I passed a stomach tube, blessing

the practice in Lochlea Asylum which had given me skill in this difficult art, and washed out the old lady's stomach with a saline solution. Next I pumped into her fifteen milligrams of diamorphine hydrochloride, perfect antidote to the deadly element in belladonna, yet toxic enough in its own right, if my diagnosis was wrong, to ease her quietly to a better world. Anxiously I studied her, awaiting the result. At first I thought she was gone. Soon, however, she began to breathe better, the pulse strengthened, and after about fifteen minutes she sighed, opened her eyes, and looked glassily at me.

"Young man," she murmured, "what are you doing in my bedroom in your dressing-gown?"

Then she tried to go to sleep again. But we would not, by any means, permit her to do so. All night long, despite her pleadings, the little maid and I marched her up and down the apartment, pausing only at intervals to dose her with black coffee well laced with stimulant. When morning came the effects of the drug had worn off and, in about a week, despite the apparent frailty of her constitution and her advanced age—she had long since passed her seventieth year—she made a complete recovery.

Firmly resisting my attempt to return her to the care of her own doctor, whom she characterized as a gouty old fool, she adopted me as her physician, insisting that I visit her every day. Thus began my acquaintance, ripening quickly to deep friendship, with one of the most remarkable old ladies I have ever known.

Of Spanish extraction—her maiden name was Mina da Costa—she had been born in Buenos Aires and had married, of all people, an adventurous expatriate Scotsman. Much of her life had been spent in Mexico, where her husband had managed, and finally owned, a large silver mine near Asunsolo and where, during the revolution of 1917, he had been fatally shot. She had travelled, in later years, to every corner of the globe, to countries as far apart as India and Brazil, climes as different as Persia and Peru.

A complete cosmopolitan, she had spent lavishly. Even now, restricted physically and, to a certain extent, financially, she still maintained her cheerful, worldly outlook, and in her bright, bird-like eye there burned, with a kind of humorous irony, the determination to continue to enjoy her life to the last gasp.

There was in her, apparently, not a shred of sentiment. In contrast to those patients who profusely, often tearfully, voiced their gratitude, then left the district without paying their bills, she never thanked me for saving her life. But one day when I called, she handed me in silence a small tissue-wrapped package. It was an exquisite gold cigarette case, inscribed with my monogram, the phrase *Recuerdo de Mina*, and the date 30.4.29. When I attempted to express my appreciation, she brushed aside my words.

A few days later her son, Manuel Arbuthnot, called upon me. He was a man of about forty, short and suave, with brilliant dark eyes, smooth olive complexion and glossy black hair. Dressed in dark broadcloth, a pearl in his sombre grey tie, he conveyed an impression of perfect elegance, a trifle overpolished perhaps, yet restrained by impeccable good taste. Such a man, son of such a mother, might well be expected to follow some bizarre pursuit, and I was not surprised when he informed me that he was head buyer for the West End *maison* named Brunelle's, whose clientele included many of London's most fashionable women.

Manuel's visit was brief. He spoke a little of a recent business trip to Paris, thanked me politely for my attention to his mother, then rose to go. As he left me at the front door he handed me, with an almost imperceptible bow, his card. At least, I fancied it to be his card until, a moment later, I discovered it to be the address of a firm of tailors: Sandon and Company, 12 Savile Row. Involuntarily, I burst out laughing, but it was not a particularly merry laugh—I felt that my visitor was rather too cold a customer for my taste and that his gratitude had been expressed in a somewhat peculiar form.

However, I had reason to regret this hasty judgment, for

presently there arrived at my surgery a number of the staff of Brunelle's—seamstresses, messenger girls and *vendeuses*. Then came a bevy of those glamorous creatures who acted as mannequins for the house and whose function was, of course, to sell fantastically costly creations, in which they themselves looked ravishing, to women no longer young, fighting a perpetual battle with expanding waistlines. When I cured their coughs and colds, they were quick to accept me as a counsellor and confidant and to recommend me not only to their friends but also to their clients.

This was a tremendous benefit. A doctor is not permitted to advertise—it is the process of recommendation which does the trick. Thus calls began to come in, at first gradually, but then with increasing frequency, from parts of London outside my own district, and far superior to it in social standing. I went to South Kensington, to Knightsbridge, to Mayfair, entering these fine houses in the beginning with great timidity, then with confidence, and finally with that assurance which springs from the knowledge of one's success.

Most of these patients were women, many of them rich, idle, spoiled and neurotic. A young doctor with a Scots accent strongly recommended by one of Manuel's young mannequins, was a distinct novelty, regarded with the curious interest they might bestow upon a species of new lap-dog. Yet I was no lap-dog. I was firm, I was stern. I bullied and I commanded. I even invented a new disease for them—asthenia—which means no more than weakness or general debility.

Having created a disease, it was essential to produce the remedy. At this time the system of medication by intramuscular injection was coming into vogue—a process whereby tonic medicaments were introduced to the patient's blood stream by hypodermic syringe. Later on, this technique was largely discounted as being in no way superior to the old-fashioned method of oral administration, but at that moment it suited me to perfection.

Injectations for asthenia now became as much the mode and as

eagerly sought after as Manuel's new spring gowns. Again and yet again my sharp and shining needle sank into fashionable buttocks, bared upon the finest linen sheets. I became expert, indeed, superlative, in the art of penetrating the worst end of the best society with a dexterity which rendered the operation almost painless—my standard preamble being, "I assure you, dear lady, this will cause you no inconvenience"—and which increased my reputation by leaps and bounds.

Strange though it may seem, the results of this complex process were surprisingly successful. Asthenia gave these bored and idle women an interest in life. My tonics braced their languid nerves. I dieted them, insisted on a régime of moderate exercise and early hours. I even persuaded two errant wives to return to their long-suffering husbands, with the result that within nine months they had other matters than asthenia to occupy them.

For one who had hitherto been struggling in a middle-class surgery for driblets of five shillings and even half a crown, this turn of events was a godsend, a lifesaver—in brief, immensely profitable. My treatment would never have been deemed worth while had I not charged for it an appropriately exorbitant fee. Where pence had previously been my recompense, guineas now poured in—a golden stream.

Why should I be hypocritical and pretend that this success was not gratifying to me? It brought many pleasant things in its train. Presently our obligation for the practice I had bought was fully discharged, the house repainted and properly furnished. There was a neat maid to open the door, and a nice nurse to take the children out for afternoons in the park. I had been put up for a good club, escaped occasionally for an afternoon's golf, and I made my visits in a new Austin coupé.

Often I would pause and, in a kind of daze, wonder at the circumstances which had brought us all this . . . and, we hoped, heaven, too. At the back of my mind I was conscious now and then of a vague dissatisfaction as the character of my practice

changed. More and more I was preoccupied by my "high-class" patients, less and less by ordinary working people. While I enjoyed the sweets of prosperity and revelled in the sense of fulfilled ambition—nothing is more thrilling to the Scot than the knowledge that he is "getting on"—I could not but contrast the work I was now doing with the work I had once done.

The climax came one afternoon when I stepped out of my consulting-room for a cup of tea, very well pleased with myself, having just conducted to the door a new patient—an erect, military-looking man with a coppery complexion and a moustache.

"Do you know who that was?" I inquired smugly of my wife. She shook her head.

"Sir ———, C.B., I.C.S." I mentioned a name prominently before the public of that day. "I'm getting the men now as well as the women. He was referred to me by his wife."

"What's wrong with him?"

"Not much," I chuckled. "Touch of liver. He's going to have a course of injections at five guineas a time. Think of it. When we started here I had to sweat like the devil for a miserable two and six. And now, five guineas for three minutes' work."

She did not answer but, in silence, poured me another cup of tea. Something in her reserve nettled me.

"Well, what about it? Don't you think I deserve some credit?" I smoothed the lapels of my well-cut Savile Row suit. "After all, I've come a long way from the days when I tramped up the miners' rows in dirty oilskins and hobnail pit boots."

She looked me straight between the eyes.

"I think I liked you better in those hobnail boots. You thought more of your cases and less of your guineas when you wore them."

I reddened to the roots of my hair. I wanted to shout "There's no satisfying you!"—but I surprised myself by keeping silent. Then, after a long pause, I mumbled:

"Perhaps you're right. . . . Mustn't ever forget those days. . . . They were worth while."



CHAPTER 14

WE HAD now been five years in Bayswater. Our two boys were attending kindergarten, our lives moved so regularly and smoothly that my dear wife had the delusion we were permanently settled, that nothing could now arise to ruffle the even course of her life.

We had succeeded, amazingly, in our assault upon London, which had once intimidated us and seemed so difficult to conquer. The practice which I had taken over now extended in scope and character far beyond its original limits. I had come to know many of the leading physicians and surgeons of the day, and called in consultation men like Lord Horder, Sir Arbuthnot Lane and Sir Morley Fletcher. Recently I had been appointed medical officer to that great department store, Whiteley's.

One morning, however, I was shaken by an unusually severe attack of indigestion—a condition I had been staving off with increasing doses of bicarbonate of soda since my student days. On this occasion I called to see Dr. Bennett, a good friend of mine who specialized in maladies of the digestive organs.

I expected a bottle of bismuth and an invitation to play golf. Instead, I received the shock of my life. He told me, seriously, that I had a chronic duodenal ulcer which would certainly perforate if I did not take myself in hand. His sentence was immutable—low diet and, as soon as I could arrange it, six months' complete rest in the country. Shaken, I rose from the couch in his consulting-room. . . . How could I possibly leave a practice so completely individual as mine for such a period? With my impatient temperament I had never been able to endure an assistant. A locum tenens—how well I knew the breed—would ruin my years of careful work within six weeks. Then, as I began to put on my shirt, a strange, irrational thought suddenly transfixed me. I stood

for a moment, meditating, looking back towards the longings of my youth. Then I nodded, slowly and solemnly, to myself. It was the most important gesture of my life.

For two weeks I said nothing of my interview with Bennett; then, one spring afternoon, I came in, sat down, gazed at the ceiling, and in that dreamy voice which betokens my most irrational decisions, remarked to my wife:

"It's high time we cleared out of here."

She stared at me.

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Precisely what I say, my dear."

"But we're happy here, absolutely settled, with the children and everything. You've always had that bee in your bonnet, never content, wanting to dash off at a minute's notice." She paused for breath. "In any case, you never could sell the practice here." She brought out the argument triumphantly. "It's much too large and personal."

"My dear . . . please don't get mad. . . . I'm afraid I have sold it."

She turned white. She couldn't believe it. Then she saw that it was true. She whispered palely:

"What are you going to do?"

I was silent with, for once, a shamefaced air.

"As a matter of fact . . . I'm going . . . to try to write."

"Oh Lord," she gasped, bursting into tears. "You *have* gone crazy."

At this point I felt I had better establish my sanity. I explained, trying not to alarm her, what the doctor had told me. Then I went on, in a low voice, apologetic yet firm:

"I've always had this queer urge to be a writer . . . ever since I was a youngster. But naturally if I'd told them that back home in Scotland, they'd have thought I was wrong in the head. I had to do something sensible instead. That's why I went in for medicine. Oh, I admit I liked it all right. I like it quite well now, I

might even go so far as to say that I'm good at it. But all the time I've felt this other thing at the back of my mind. When I've been attending my patients, seeing people as they really are, I've kept thinking what stories I could make out of them. I wanted to describe the characters I was meeting, get something down on paper. Of course, I hadn't the time; you need quiet and detachment for that sort of thing, and we were always tearing so hard to get on. Well, now we have got on. I can take six months, even a year, to give myself a chance to write. At least I'll get the bug out of my system. It's a million to one I'm no good. And if I'm not, I can always come back to the treadmill."

There was a long silence. She could not deny that, through the years, she had suspected in me this desire for self-expression. But she had never taken it seriously. When, after dinner and a hard day's work, I had vaguely mentioned my longing to do a book, she smiled at me kindly over her knitting and led me on to talk about my golf handicap. But this was different. This wild project, this disruption, once again, of our pleasant domesticity, seemed to her sheer lunacy.

And it was all fixed, settled and arranged. What a man! Had he no thought of the children or of his wife? She boiled with anger and dismay.

"Remember that chap Gauguin," I reminded her diffidently. "The Paris banker who, without warning, suddenly threw up his humdrum life and sailed off to paint pictures—and good ones—in Tahiti."

"Tahiti," she moaned, "and after that I suppose it will be Timbuktu. For heaven's sake, be sensible. What did Dr. Bennett say was wrong with you?"

"Oh, just a gastric condition. But I must have a rest."

"Yes . . . yes . . ." she murmured unsteadily. "You haven't really been well lately. . . ."

Torn by conflicting emotions, she smiled wanly, then laid her head upon my shoulder and dissolved into tears.

The place selected for our preposterous adventure was Dalchenna farm, a small steading in the western Highlands of Scotland. And three weeks later, when all the details of the transfer of the practice had been settled, we set out for this remote spot, the car jammed with our belongings, our two boys wild with excitement.

I will acknowledge that my mood at the outset was scarcely a confident one. Yet as we sped along, that fine June day, my heart lifted—after all, we had not had a real holiday for years. And when at last we reached the moors and mountains of our native countryside, I stopped the car and turned to my wife. Her glance was as tender as my own and suddenly, forgivingly, she threw her arms around my neck. Lambs were frisking in the meadow, a stream, fretted by the sunshine, rippled by the roadside, our children, released from the back seat, were gathering wild daffodils.

"It's wonderful to be back again," she whispered in my ear. "You'll get well here, dear . . . well and strong. We'll have a lovely time. . . . And we'll forget all about that old book."

THE highland clachan of Inveraray, little more than a cluster of whitewashed cottages huddled about the castle of the Duke of Argyll, lies among a wild grandeur of mountains at the head of lovely Loch Fyne. On all sides green meadows surrounded us; beyond were woods of alder carpeted with bluebells and mitred bracken into which, as we approached, a roe deer bounded; while above towered the heather-clad hills, source of a stream, filled with trout, that tumbled down in golden spate towards the loch.

For the two boys, aged four and seven, who really had no recollection of anything but city life, the place was truly a wonderland. But for me, alas, the picture was somewhat different.

Having emphatically declared before my entire household that I *would* write a novel—tacitly implying, of course, that it was the fault of every other member of the household that I had not

written twenty novels—I found myself faced with the unpleasant necessity of justifying my rash remarks.

On the morning following our arrival, I retired, with a show of courage and deep purpose, to the top attic of the house which had been at once selected as “the room for Daddy to write in.” Firmly I opened a twopenny exercise book, firmly I jogged my fountain pen out of its habitual inertia. Firmly I poised that pen and lifted my head for inspiration.

It was a pleasant view through the window: a long green field ran down to a bay of the loch. There was movement. Six cows, couched in the shadow of a hawthorn hedge, ruminated with steady rhythm; an old goat with an arresting beard tinkled his bell in search, I thought, of dandelions; a yellow butterfly hovered indecisively above a scarlet spurt of fuchsias.

It had all a seductive, dreamlike interest. I thought I might contemplate the scene for a minute or two before settling down to work. I contemplated. Then somebody knocked at the door and said, “Lunch-time.” I started, and searched hopefully for my glorious beginning, only to find that the exercise book still retained its blank virginity.

I went downstairs and carved the mutton glumly. My two young sons were in high spirits. The younger, aged four, lisped breezily:

“Finished your book yet, Daddy?”

The elder affirmed with the superior wisdom of his three additional years:

“Don’t be silly. Daddy’s only half finished.”

Whereupon their mother smiled upon them reprovingly:

“No, dears, Daddy can only have written a chapter or two.”

I felt like a humbug. Determinedly I called to mind the aphorism of an old schoolmaster of mine. “Get it down,” he used to declare. “If it stays in your head it’ll never be anything. Get it down.” So after lunch I went straight upstairs and began to get my ideas down.

I could fill a volume with the emotional experiences of those next three months. Although the theme of the novel I wished to write was already outlined in my mind—the tragic record of a man's egotism and bitter pride—I was, beyond these naïve fundamentals, lamentably unprepared. Most novelists who suddenly blaze into print in their thirties have practised their vice secretly for years. But I, until this moment, had written nothing but prescriptions and scientific papers. It took great determination to drive me through my inhibitions, like a circus rider through a paper hoop.

I had no pretensions to technique, no knowledge of style or form. The difficulty of simple statement staggered me. I spent hours looking for an adjective. I corrected and recorrected until the page looked like a spider's web; then I tore it up and started all over again.

All through that lovely summer, while the others enjoyed themselves, I remained chained to my desk. Although at the time I maintained a stoic silence, I will now confess to the miseries I went through. There were redeeming moments when, carried away by what I had written, living with my characters in the drama they were enacting, I dared to hope that I was doing something fine; but for the most part I felt that all my drudgery was quite useless, that I was wasting my time in sheer futility.

The worst moment came when I was halfway through the book, and the typescript of the first chapters arrived from a secretarial bureau in London. As I read the opening pages, a wave of horror swept over me. I thought, "Have I written this awful stuff? No one will ever read it. No one will ever publish it. I simply can't go on!"

I had the impulse there and then to throw up the whole project, destroy everything I had written. It was irresistible. I got up with a set face, took the manuscript to the back door and flung it in the dust-bin.

When the news was known, a dire silence fell upon the house.

I remember so well—it started to rain, a dank Scots afternoon and, scared by my scowl, my wife and the two boys left me without a word.

Drawing a sullen satisfaction from my surrender, or, as I preferred to phrase it, my return to sanity, I went for a walk in the drizzling rain. Halfway down the loch shore I came upon old Angus, the neighbouring farmer, patiently and laboriously ditching a patch of the bogged and peaty heath which made up the bulk of his hard-won little croft. He gazed up at me in some surprise; he knew of my intention and, with that inborn Scottish reverence for “letters,” had tacitly approved it. When I told him what I had just done, and why, his keen blue eyes scanned me with disappointment and a queer contempt. He was a silent man, and it was long before he spoke. Even then his words were cryptic.

“No doubt you’re the one that’s right, Doctor, and I’m the one that’s wrong. . . .” He seemed to look right through me. “My father ditched this bog all his days and never made a pasture. I’ve dug it all *my* days and I’ve never made a pasture. But, pasture or no pasture”—he placed his foot on the spade—“I cannot help but dig. For my father knew and I know that if you only dig enough, a pasture can be made here.”

I understood. I watched his dogged figure, working away, determined to see the job through at all costs. In silence I tramped back to the house, drenched, shamed, furious, and picked the soggy bundle from the dust-bin. I dried it in the kitchen oven. Then I flung it on the table and set to work again with a kind of frantic desperation. I would not be beaten, I would not give in. Night after night, keeping myself awake by sheer will power, I wrote harder than ever. At last, towards the end of September, I wrote “*Finis*.” I had kept my word. I had created a book. Whether it was good, bad or indifferent I did not know.

With a sigh of incredible relief, I packed the manuscript and dispatched it in an untidy parcel to a publisher whose address I found in a two-year-old almanac. The days succeeded one another,



and nothing happened. I had no illusions—I was fully aware that aspiring authors acquire rejection slips more readily than cheques, and that first manuscripts usually come back a score of times before being accepted—if indeed they are ever accepted at all. My surprise and delight may therefore be imagined when, one morning in October, I received a wire from the head of the publishing firm which I had selected, informing me that the novel had been accepted for publication, offering an advance of fifty pounds and asking me to come to London immediately.

As we read the telegram, a stunned awe fell upon the farm living-room. Fifty pounds, cash down, seemed a lot of money, and perhaps later there might even be a little more, on account of royalties. Pale and rather shaky, I muttered:

“Maybe, with luck and economy, I can make a living as a writer. Get the timetable and find out when the next train leaves for London.”

Looking back upon the events which followed, it seems incredible, even now, how swiftly, how amazingly, from that uncertain moment, the flood tide of success was loosed. This first novel, *Hatter's Castle*, written despairingly on twopenny exercise books, thrown out and rescued from the rubbish heap at the eleventh hour, was published in the spring of 1930. It was acclaimed by critics, chosen by the Book Society, translated into twenty-one languages, serialized, dramatized and filmed. It went into endless editions, has sold, to date, approximately three million copies, and goes on selling still. It launched me upon a literary career with such an impetus that, once and for all, I hung up my stethoscope and put away that little black bag—my medical days were over.

A. J. Cronin

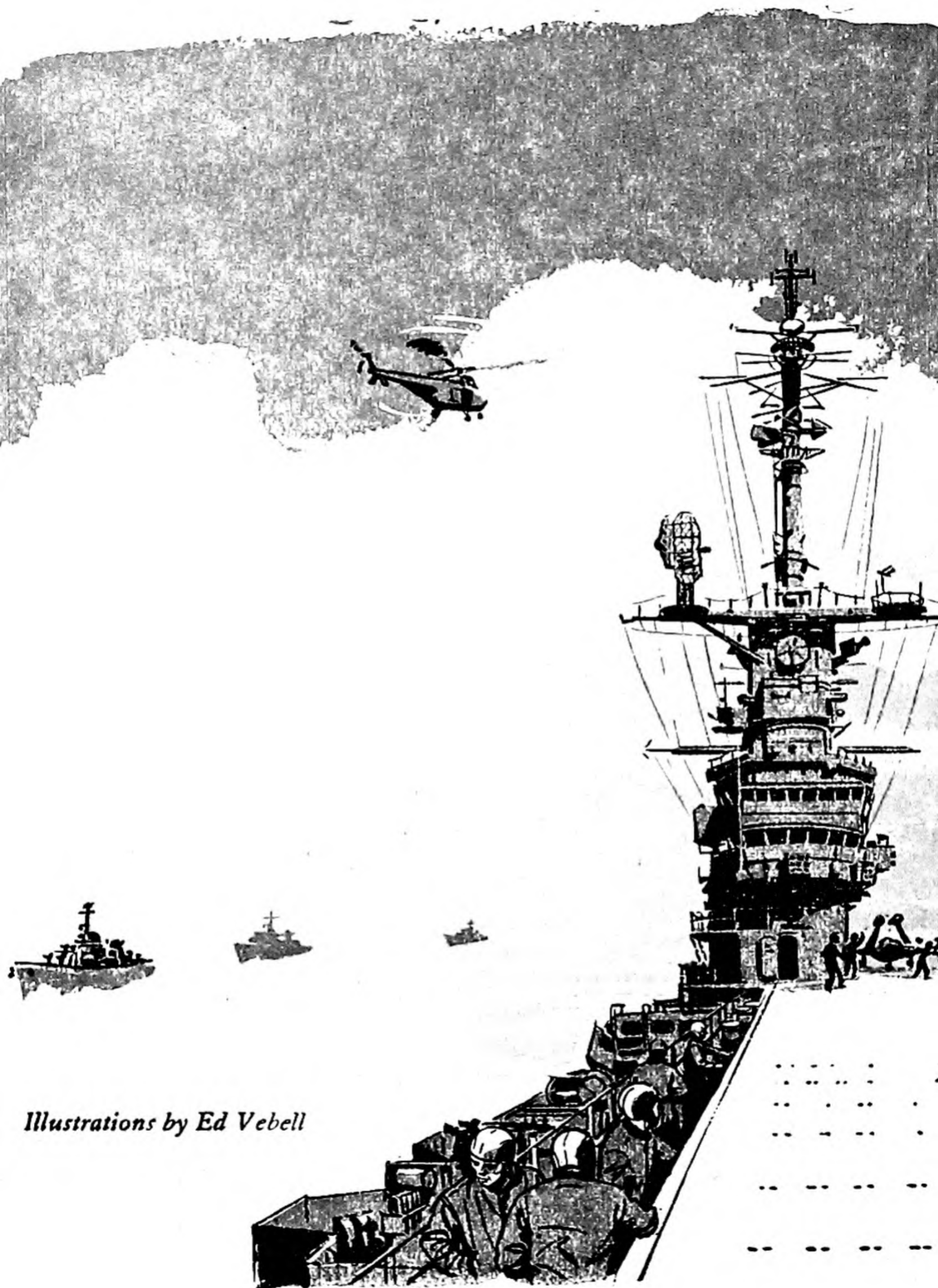


IN THE selection from *Adventures in Two Worlds* presented in this volume, A. J. Cronin tells the story of the trials and successes of his early life. With the publication of *Hatter's Castle* in 1930, a new world opened up for him. Many of his nine subsequent novels have been outstanding best sellers, fulfilling the promise critics saw in his first work.

Many who enjoy this condensation from *Adventures in Two Worlds* will recognize in the scenes of young Doctor Cronin's struggles the authentic backgrounds of such well-remembered novels as *The Stars Look Down*, *The Citadel* and *The Green Years*. For, as he says, "an author can write only from his own knowledge."

Though he is one of the most successful authors of our time, A. J. Cronin finds writing no easy task. "For me it is a dreadful anguish," he says. "If I am eventually lost, which God forbid, there will be no need of everlasting fire. It will be enough to keep me writing and writing through the eternal darkness."

THE BRIDGES AT
TOKO-RI

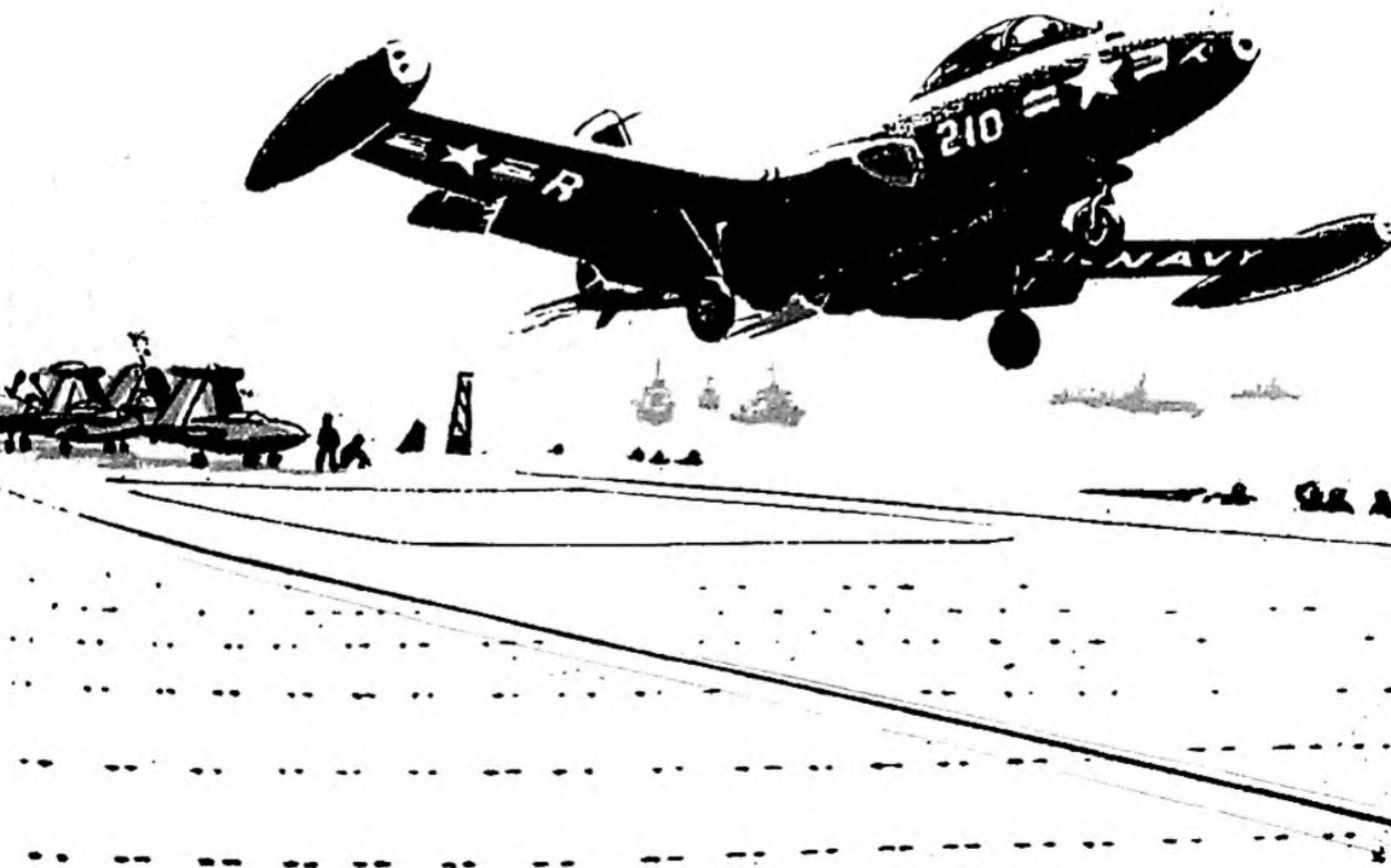


Illustrations by Ed Vebell

The Bridges at Toko-ri

A condensation of the book by

JAMES A. MICHENER



"The Bridges at Toko-ri" is published by Secker & Warburg, London.

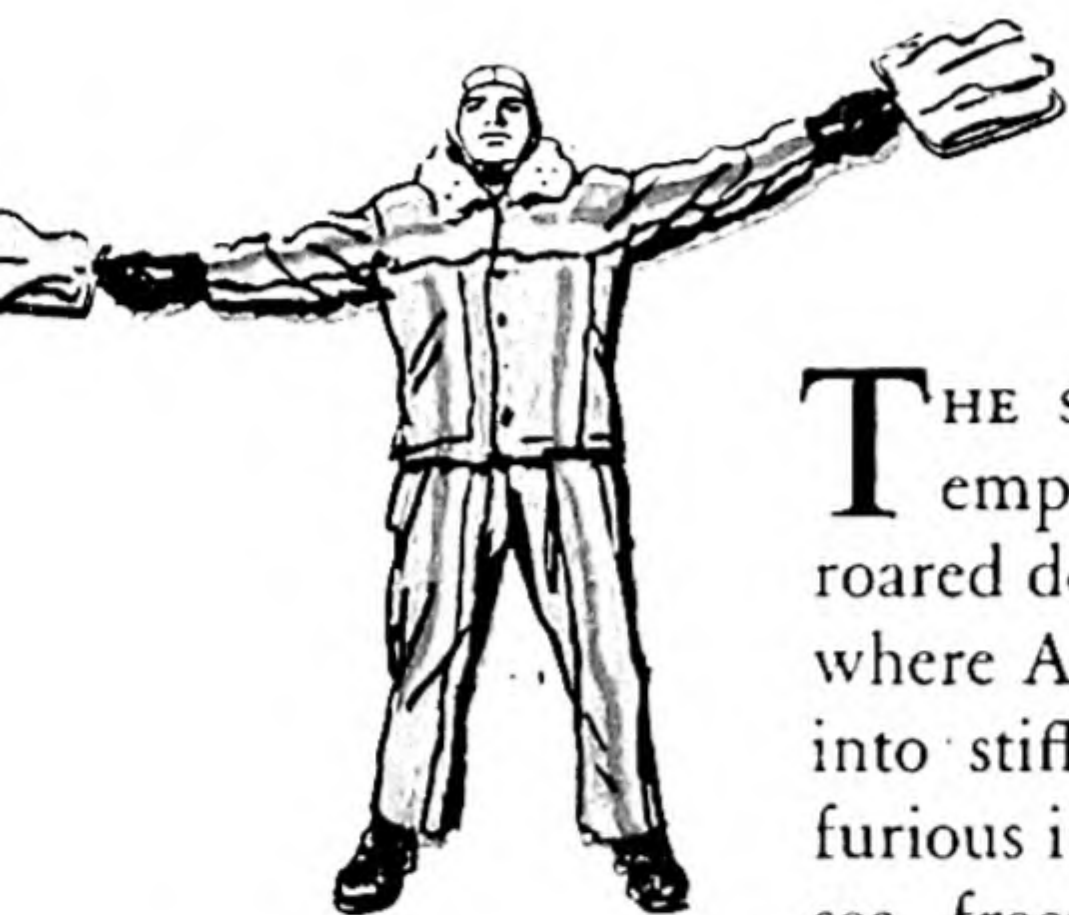
*I*N Korea the American nation has undergone a new and sometimes bewildering experience. It has been our first taste of exercising the responsibility thrust upon us by our unsought leadership of the free world.

This novel tries to explain our experience in Korea. It deals with the Navy but it could just as well have told about Air Force pilots fighting Russian MiGs. Or Marines and their march from the reservoir. Or the Army's determined stand at Pusan. It's a Navy story because I happened to be aboard a carrier when the meaning of Korea set my mind on fire.

—James A. Michener

"The book has an importance beyond mere entertainment—I commend it to you warmly."

—Nigel Nicholson in *The Daily Dispatch*



I : SEA

THE SEA was bitter cold. From the vast empty plains of Siberia howling winds roared down to lash the mountains of Korea, where American soldiers lost on patrol froze into stiff and awkward forms. Then with furious intensity the arctic wind swept out to sea, freezing even the salt spray that leaped into the air from crests of falling waves.

Through these turbulent seas, not far from the trenches of Korea, ploughed a formation of American warships. A battleship and two cruisers, accompanied by fourteen destroyers to shield against Russian submarines, held steady course as their icy decks rose and fell and shivered in the gale. They were the ships of Task Force 77 and they had been sent to destroy the Communist-held bridges at Toko-ri.

Towards the centre of this powerful assembly rode two fast carriers, the task force's mighty arm. Their massive decks pitched at crazy angles, which for the present made take-offs or landings impossible. Their planes stood useless, huddled together in the wind, lashed down by steel cables.

It was strange, and in some perverse way resolutely American, that these two carriers wallowing in the dusk bore names which memorialized not stirring victories but humiliating defeats, as if by thus publishing her indifference to catastrophe and her willingness to surmount it, the United States were defying her enemies. To the east, and farther out to sea, rode the *Hornet*, whose predecessor of that name had absorbed a multitude of Japanese bombs and

torpedoes, going down off Guadalcanal, while the inboard carrier, the *Savo*, would for ever remind the Navy of its most shameful defeat in history, when four cruisers sank helpless at Savo Island, caught sleeping by the audacious Japanese.

Now, as night approached the freezing task force, the bull horn on the *Savo* rasped out, "Prepare to launch aircraft!" It was obvious from the way her deck was arranged that the carrier already had some planes in the skies, and every man who watched the heaving sea wondered how those planes could possibly get back aboard.

The bull horn, ignoring such problems, roared, "Prepare to launch helicopter!" and although the deck pitched in abandon, rotors began to turn, slowly at first and then with lumbering speed.

Now the great carrier struck a sea trough and slid away, her deck lurching, but relentlessly the bull horn cried, "Move jets into position for launching," and the catapult crew, fighting for footing on the sliding deck, sprang swiftly into action, inching two heavy Banshees on to the catapults, taking painful care not to allow the jets to get rolling lest they plunge overboard.

"Start jet engines," roared the insistent bull horn. And the doctor, who had to be on deck in case of crash, looked at the heaving sea and yelled to the crane operator, "They may launch these jets, but they'll never get 'em back aboard."

At this instant all ships of the task force swung in tight circles and headed away from the open sea, straight for the nearby cliffs of Korea, and when the turn was completed, the deck of the *Savo* mysteriously stabilized. The effects of wind and sea neutralized each other, and planes returning from the bombardment of Korea now had a safe place to land.

But before they could do so the bull horn cried eerily into the dusk, "Launch helicopter!" and the crazy bird, its two rotors spinning so slowly the blades could be seen, stumbled into the air, and the horn cried, "Launch jets!"

The catapult officer whirled one finger above his head and a

tremendous, almost unbearable roar arose and twin blasts of heat leaped from each Banshee, burning the icy air more than a hundred feet aft. Now the officer whirled two fingers and the roar increased and white heat scorched the deck of the carrier. The twin engines whipped to a speed of thirteen thousand revolutions a minute and the Banshee pilot, forcing his head back against a cushion, saluted and the catapult officer's right hand whipped down and the catapult fired.

Nine tons of jet aircraft were swept down the deck at a speed of more than a hundred and thirty-five miles an hour. Within less than a hundred and fifty feet the immense Banshee was airborne, and by the time it reached the forward edge of the carrier, it was headed towards its mission. Four times the catapults fired and four times heavy jets leaped into the darkening sky and headed for the coastline of Korea.

As soon as they had left, the bull horn wailed, "Respot planes. On the double. We must recover the Korea jets immediately."

Thirty old-fashioned propeller planes were lashed down on the after part of the flight deck in precisely that area needed for landing the jets which now appeared overhead. They had been stowed there to permit catapult take-offs, and now they must be moved forward. So on the wooden deck, swept by icy winds, hundreds of young men in varicoloured uniforms sped to the task of clearing the landing space. Men in green stowed the catapult gear so that no remnant of the powerful machine was visible. Other men in yellow leaped upon the deck and began to indicate the course each plane must follow to forward stowage. Dozens of tough young men in blue leaned their shoulders against the planes, swung them laboriously into position and pushed them slowly into the biting wind. In blazing red uniforms other men checked guns or fuelled empty craft while plane captains in brown sat in cockpits and worked the brakes to prevent accident. Darting about through the milling, pushing, shouting deck-hands three-wheeled jeeps of vivid yellow and lumbering tractors in sombre grey hurried to their jobs,

while over all towered the mighty arms of the enormous black and sinister crane. Behind it lurked two weird men in fantastic suits of grey asbestos, their faces peering from huge glassine boxes, ready to save the pilot if a crashed plane should burn, while behind them, clothed in snowy white, the doctor waited, for death was always close upon the carrier deck.

Thus in the jet age of incredible speed, these men pushed and pulled and slipped upon the icy deck and ordered the heavy planes with their bare hands. Upon trailing edges burdened with ice they pushed, their faces open to the freezing wind, their eyes heavy with frozen salt and the knuckles of their hands covered long since with protecting scars. And as they moved, their bright colours formed the pattern of a dance and after they had swarmed upon the deck for some minutes the *Savo* was transformed and from the lowering shadows the jets prepared to land.

This intricate operation was guided by one man. From the admiral's country he had directed the task force to run towards the Communist coast. The last four jets had been dispatched at his command. He had placed the ships so that the operations of one would not trespass the allotted space of the other, and it was his responsibility to see that his carriers faced the wind in such position that smoke trailed off to one side rather than directly aft and into the faces of incoming pilots. Now, from his bridge, he watched the mountains of Korea moving perilously close.

Admiral George Tarrant was a tall narrow man with a sharp face that was sour and withdrawing like those of his Maine ancestors. Battle-wizened, he had fought the Japanese with his own carrier at Saipan, at Iwo Jima and at Okinawa, where his austere and lonely presence had brought almost as much terror to his own fliers as it had to the enemy.

He was known through the Navy as George the Tyrant, and any aviator who wanted to fetch a big laugh would grab a saucer in his left hand, a coffee cup in his right, lean back in his chair and survey the audience sourly, snorting, "Rubbish." Then the mimic

would stare piercingly at some one pilot, jab the coffee cup at him and growl, "You, son. What do you think?"

But men who served with Tarrant soon forgot his tyranny and remembered his fantastic skill in operating a task force. His men said flatly, "He can do it better than anyone else in the world." He knew the motion of the sea and could estimate whether a morning swell would rise to prevent recovery of afternoon planes or subside so that even jets could land freely. He was able to guess when new gales of bitter Siberian air would rush the line of snowstorms out to sea and when the snow would come creeping softly back and throw a blizzard about the task force as it slept at night.

He fought upon the surface of the sea and in the sky. He sent his planes inland to support ground troops or far out to sea to spot Russian submarines. His was the most complex combat command of which one man's mind was capable and on him alone depended decisions of the gravest moment. For example, the position he was now in, with mountains closing down upon him, was his responsibility. Early that morning his aerologist had warned, "Wind's coming up, sir. You might run out of ocean by afternoon."

He studied the charts and growled, "We'll make it."

Now his navigator warned, "We can't hold this course more than sixteen minutes, sir." The young officer looked at the looming coastline as if to add, "After that we'll have to turn back and abandon the planes."

"We'll make it," Tarrant grumbled as his ships ploughed resolutely on towards the crucial hundred-fathom curve which he dare not penetrate for fear of shoals, mines and submarines. But he turned his back upon this problem, for he could do nothing about it now. Instead, he checked to be sure the *Savo's* deck was ready and in doing so he saw something which reassured him. Far aft, standing upon a tiny platform that jutted out over the side of the carrier, stood a hulking giant, muffled in fur and holding two landing paddles in his huge hands. It was Beer Barrel, and if any man could bring jets surely and swiftly home, it was Beer Barrel.

He was an enormous man, six feet three, more than seventeen stone, and his heavy suit, stitched with strips of fluorescent cloth to make his arms and legs easier to read, added to his bulk. He was a farmer from Texas who before the perilous days of 1943 had never seen the ocean, but he possessed a fabulous ability to sense the motion of the sea and what position the carrier deck would take. He could judge the speed of jets as they whirled down upon him, but most of all he could imagine himself in the cockpit of every incoming plane and he seemed to know what tired and jittery pilots would do next and he saved their lives. He was a fearfully bad naval officer and in some ways a disgrace to his uniform, but everyone felt better when he came aboard a carrier, for he could do one thing. He could land planes.

He could reach out with his great hands and bring them safely home the way falconers used to bring back birds they loved. In the Pentagon they knew he broke rules and smuggled beer aboard each ship he served upon. Carrier captains knew it, and even Admiral Tarrant, who was a terror on navy rules, looked the other way when Beer Barrel staggered back after each drunken liberty, lugging his two ridiculous golf bags. The huge Texan had never played golf and the two clubs sticking out were dummies.

Once a deck-hand had grabbed one of the bags to help, but the surprising weight of it had crumpled him to the deck. Beer Barrel, barely able to lift up the bag himself, had got it on to his massive shoulder, whispering beerily, "Thanks, Junior, but this is man's work." And he had carried the bags full of beer into his quarters.

For he believed that if he had a can of cold beer in his belly it formed a kind of gyroscope which made him unusually sensitive to the sea and that when this beer sloshed about it harmonized with the elements and he became one with the sea and the sky and the heaving deck and the heart of the incoming pilot.

"Land jets!" moaned the bull horn.

"Let's hear the checks," Beer Barrel said to his watchers, staring aft to catch the first jet as it made its hundred and eighty degree

turn for the cross leg and the sharp final turn into the landing run. He thought, "They're always pretty comin' home at night."

"All down!" the first watcher cried as he checked the wheels, the flaps and the stout hook which now dangled lower than the wheels.

"All down," Beer Barrel echoed unemotionally.

"Clear deck!" the second watcher shouted as he checked the nylon barriers and the thirteen heavy steel wires riding a few inches off the deck, waiting to engage the hook.

"Clear deck," Beer Barrel grunted phlegmatically.

Beer Barrel extended his paddles out sideways from his shoulders, standing like an imperturbable rock, and willed the plane on to the deck. "Come on, Junior," he growled. "Keep your nose up so's your hook'll catch. Good boy!" Satisfied that all was well, he snapped his right paddle dramatically across his heart and dropped his left arm as if it had been severed clean away from his body. Instantly the jet pilot cut his flaming speed and slammed his Ban-shee on to the deck. With violent grasp the protruding hook engaged one of the slightly elevated wires and dragged the massive plane to a shuddering stop.

Beer Barrel, watching from his platform, called to the clerk who kept records on each plane, "1593. Junior done real good. Number three wire." Never did Beer Barrel feel so content as when one of his boys caught number three wire. "Heaven," he explained once, "is where everybody gets number three wire. Hell is where they fly wrong and catch number thirteen and crash into the barrier and burn. And every one of you's goin' straight to hell if you don't follow me better."

From his own bridge, Admiral Tarrant watched the jets come home. In his life he had seen many fine and stirring things: his wife at the altar, Japanese battleships going down, ducks rising from Virginia marshes, his sons in uniform. But nothing he knew surpassed the sight of Beer Barrel bringing home the jets at dusk.

There always came that exquisite moment of human judgment

when one man—a man standing alone on the remotest corner of the ship, lashed by wind and storm—had to decide that the jet roaring down upon him could make it. This solitary man had to judge the speed and height and the pitching of the deck and the wallowing of the sea and the oddities of this particular pilot and those additional imponderables that no man can explain. Then, at the last screaming second he had to make his decision and flash it to the pilot.

He had only two choices. He could land the plane and risk the life of the pilot and the plane and the ship if he had judged wrong. Or he could wave off and delay his decision until next time round. But he could delegate his job to no one. It was his, and if he did judge wrong, carnage on the carrier deck could be fearful. That was why Admiral Tarrant never bothered about the bags of beer.

On they came, the slim and beautiful jets. As they roared upwind the admiral could see their stacks flaming. When they made their far turn and roared downwind he could see the pilots as human beings, tensed up and ready for the landing that was never twice the same.

These mighty jets weighed well over seven tons; when they hit the deck their speed exceeded a hundred and thirty-five miles an hour. Yet within a hundred and twenty feet they were completely stopped and this miracle was accomplished in several ways. First, Tarrant kept his carriers headed into the wind, which on this day stormed in at nearly forty miles an hour. This cut the plane's relative speed to about ninety-five miles. Then, too, the carrier was running away from the plane at eleven miles an hour, which further cut the plane's speed to eighty-four, and it was this actual speed that the wires had to arrest. They did so with brutal strength, but should they miss, two slim nylon barriers waited to drag the plane on to the deck and chop its impetus, halting it so that it could not proceed forward to damage other planes. And finally, should a runaway jet miss both the wires and the barriers, it would plunge into a stout nylon barricade which would entwine itself about the wings

and wheels and tear the jet apart as if it were a helpless insect.

But it was Beer Barrel's job to see that the barriers and the barricade were not needed and he would shout curses at his pilots and cry, "Don't fly the deck, Junior. Don't fly the sea. Fly me." An Air Force colonel watching Beer Barrel land jets exclaimed, "Why, it isn't a landing at all! It's a controlled crash." And the big Texan replied in his beery voice, "Difference is that when I crash 'em they're safe in the arms of God."

Now he brought in three more, swiftly and surely, and Admiral Tarrant, watching the looming mountains of Korea as they moved in upon his ships, muttered, "Well, we'll make it again."

But as he said these words his squawk box sounded, and from deep within the *Savo* the combat intelligence director reported coolly, "1591 has been hit. Serious damage. May have to ditch."

"What's his position?"

"Thirty-five miles away."

"Who's with him?"

"His wingman, 1592."

"Direct him to come on in and attempt landing."

The squawk box clicked off and Admiral Tarrant looked straight ahead at the looming coast. Long ago he had learned never to panic, but he had trained himself to look at situations in their gloomiest aspects so as to be prepared for bad luck. "If this jet limps in we may have to hold this course for ten or fifteen more minutes. Well, we probably can do it."

He studied the radar screen to estimate his probable position in fifteen minutes. "Too close," he muttered. Then into the squawk box which led to the air officer of the *Savo* he said, "Recovery operations must end in ten minutes. Get all planes aboard."

"The admiral knows there's one in trouble?"

"Yes. I've ordered him to try to land."

"Yes, sir."

The bull horn sounded. "All hands. We must stop operations

within ten minutes. Get those barriers cleared faster. Bring the planes in faster."

"What's a matter?" Beer Barrel growled. "Admiral running hisself out of ocean? Get the planes up here and I'll get 'em aboard."

So the nineteen dark ships of the task force sped on towards the coastline and suddenly the squawk box rasped, "Admiral, 1591 says he will have to ditch."

"Can he ditch near the destroyers?"

"Negative."

"Is his wingman still with him?"

"Affirmative."

"How much fuel?"

"Six hundred pounds."

"Have you a fix on their positions?"

"Affirmative."

"Dispatch helicopter and tell wingman to land immediately."

There was a long silence and the voice said, "Wingman 1592 requests permission stay with downed plane till 'copter arrives."

The admiral was now faced with a decision no man should have to make. If the wingman stayed on, he would surely run out of fuel and lose his own plane and probably his life as well. But to command him to leave a downed companion was inhuman and any pilot aboard the *Savo* would prefer to risk his own life and his plane rather than to leave a man adrift in the freezing sea before the helicopter had spotted him.

For in the seas off Korea a downed airman had twenty minutes to live. That was all. The water was so bitterly cold that within five minutes the hands were frozen and the face. In twelve minutes the arms became unable to function and by the twentieth minute the pilot was frozen to death.

The decision could not be deferred, for the squawk box repeated, "Wingman 1592 requests permission to stay."

"What is the absolute minimum of gas with which the

wingman can make a straight-in landing?" the admiral asked.

There was a moment's computation. "Assuming he finds the carrier promptly, about four hundred pounds."

"Tell him to stay with the downed man. . . ."

The voice interrupted, "Admiral, 1591 has just ditched. Wingman says the plane sank immediately."

There was a moment's silence and the admiral asked, "Where's the helicopter?"

"About three more minutes away from the ditching. The wingman reports downed pilot afloat."

"Tell the wingman to orbit until helicopter arrives. Then back for a straight-in landing."

The bull horn echoed in the gathering dusk and mournful sounds spread over the flight deck, speaking of disaster. "Get those last two jets down. Prepare for emergency straight-in landing. A plane has been lost at sea. Wingman coming in short of fuel."

For a moment the many-coloured figures stopped their furious motions. The frozen hands stopped pushing jets and the yellow jeeps stayed where they were. No matter how often you heard the news it always stopped you. No matter how frozen your face was, the bull horn made you a little bit colder. And far out to sea, in a buffeted helicopter, two enlisted men were coldest of all.

At the controls was Mike Forney, a tough twenty-seven-year-old Irishman from Chicago. In a navy where enlisted men hadn't much chance of flying, Mike had made it. He had bullied his way through to flight school and his arrival aboard his ship, the *Savo*, would be remembered as long as the ship stayed afloat. It was March 17th, St. Patrick's Day, when he flew his 'copter on to the flight deck, wearing an opera hat painted green, a Baron von Richthofen scarf of Kelly green, and a clay pipe jammed into his big teeth. When the captain of the *Savo* started to reprimand him Forney said, "When I appear anywhere I want the regular pilots to know it, because if they listen to me, I'll save 'em." Now, as he sped towards the ditched pilot, he was wearing his green stovepipe

and his World War I Kelly green scarf, for he had found that when those astonishing symbols appeared at a scene of catastrophe everyone relaxed. He had already saved three pilots.

But the man flying directly behind Mike Forney's hat wasn't relaxed. Nestor Gamidge, in charge of the actual rescue gear, was a sad-faced rather stupid young man from Kentucky. Yet, as the 'copter flew low over the bitter waves to find the ditched plane, he was bright enough to know that if anyone were to save the airman pitching about in the freezing water below it would be he. In this spot the admiral didn't count, nor the wingman who was orbiting upstairs, nor even Mike Forney.

In a few minutes Nestor would lean out of the helicopter and lower a steel hoisting sling for the pilot to climb into. But from cold experience he knew that the man below would probably be too frozen even to lift his arms, so he, Nestor Gamidge, who hated the sea and who had been dragged into the Navy by his draft board, would have to jump into the icy waves and try to shove the inert body of the pilot into the sling. And if he failed—if his own hands froze before he could accomplish this—the pilot must die. That's why they gave Nestor the job. He was dumb and he was undersized but he was strong. "I see him," Nestor said.

Mike immediately called to the wingman: "1592. Go on home. This is Mike Forney and everything's under control."

"Mike!" the wingman called. "Save that guy."

"We always save 'em. Scram."

"That guy down there is Harry Brubaker. The one whose wife and kids are waiting for him in Yokosuka."

Mike said to Nestor, "You hear that? He's the one whose wife and kids came out to surprise him. But he don't know it."

"He looks froze," Nestor said, lowering the sling.

Suddenly Mike's voice lost its brashness. "Nestor," he said quietly, "if you have to jump in . . . I'll stay here till the other 'copter gets you."

In dismay, Nestor watched the sling drift past the downed pilot

and saw that the man was too frozen to catch hold. So he hauled the sling back up and said, "I'll have to go down." He fastened the sling about himself and dropped into the icy waves.

"Am I glad to see you!" the pilot cried.

"He's O.K.," Nestor signalled.

"Lash him in," Mike signalled back.

"Is that Mike? With the green hat?"

"Yep."

"My hands won't . . ."

They tried four times to force the sling down over the pilot's head and arms but the enormous weight of water-soaked clothing made him an inert lump. There was a sickening moment when Nestor thought he might fail. Then, with desperate effort, he jammed his right foot into the pilot's back and shoved. The sling caught.

Nestor lashed it fast and signalled Mike to haul away. Slowly the pilot was pulled clear of the clutching sea and was borne aloft. Nestor, wallowing below, thought, "There goes another."

Then he was alone on the



bosom of the great sea and, unless the second helicopter arrived immediately, he would die. Already, overpowering cold tore at the seams of his clothing and crept in to get him. He could feel it numb his powerful hands and attack his strong legs. It was the engulfing sea, the icy and deadly sea that he despised and he was deep into it and his arms were growing heavy.

Then, out of the gathering darkness, came the *Hornet's* 'copter.

Mike called the *Savo* and reported, "Two 'copters comin' home with two frozen mackerel."

"What was that?" the *Savo* asked gruffly.

"What I said," Mike replied, and the two whirly birds headed for home, each dangling below it the freezing body of a man too stiff to crawl inside.

Meanwhile Admiral Tarrant was faced with a new problem. The downed pilot had been rescued but the incoming wingman had fuel sufficient for only one pass, and if that pass were waved off the pilot would have to crash-land into the sea and hope for a destroyer pick-up, unless the other 'copter from the *Hornet* could find him in the gathering dusk.

But far more important than the fate of one Banshee were the nineteen ships of the task force which were now closing the hundred fathom mark. For them to proceed farther would be to invite the most serious trouble. They had at most two minutes more on course, after which they would be forced to run with the wind, and then no jet could land, for the combined speed of jet and wind would be more than a hundred and seventy-five miles, which would tear out any landing hook and probably the barriers as well. But the same motive that had impelled the wingman to stay at the scene of the crash, the motive that forced Nestor Gamidge to plunge into the icy sea, was at work upon the admiral: "We'll hold the wind a little longer. Move a little closer to shore." For the life of one pilot he was willing to gamble his command that there were no mines and that Russia had no submarines lurking between him and the shore.

"1592 approaching," the squawk box rasped.

"Warn him to come straight in."

Outside the bull horn growled, "Prepare to land last jet, straight in."

The *Savo* rode solemnly on, lingering to catch this last plane. On the landing platform Beer Barrel's watcher cried, "Hook down, wheels down, flaps down."

"All down," Beer Barrel droned.

"Clear deck!"

"Clear deck."

Beer Barrel, on his wooden platform, watched the jet come in straight and low and slowing down.

"Don't watch the sea, Junior," he chanted. "Watch me. Hit me. Hit me in the kisser with your left wing tank and you'll be all right, Junior." His massive arms were outstretched with the paddles parallel to the deck and the jet screamed in, trying to adjust its altitude to the shifting carrier's.

"Don't fly the deck, Junior!" roared Beer Barrel, and for one fearful instant it looked as if the onrushing jet had put itself too high. In that millionth of a second Beer Barrel thought he would have to wave the plane off but then his judgment cried that there was a chance the plane could make it. So he shouted, "Keep comin', Junior!" and at the last moment he whipped the right paddle across his heart and dropped the left.

The plane was indeed high and for one devastating moment seemed to be floating down the deck and into the parked jets. Then, when a crash seemed inevitable, it settled fast and caught number nine wire. The jet screamed ahead and finally stopped with its slim nose peering into the webs of the barrier.

"You fly real good, Junior," Beer Barrel said, tucking the paddles under his arm, but when the pilot climbed down his face was ashen and he shouted, "They rescue Brubaker?"

"They got him."

The pilot seemed to slump and his plane captain ran up and

caught him by the arm and led him to the ladder. As they reached for the first step they stumbled and pitched forward, so swift was the *Savo's* groaning turn back out to sea.

As soon as the helicopters appeared with little Gamidge and the unconscious body of the pilot dangling in the icy air, Admiral Tarrant sent his personal aide down to sick bay to tell the helicopter men he would like to see them after the flight doctor had taken care of them. In a few minutes they arrived.

The admiral poured them coffee and said, "Sit down." Pointing at Gamidge with his coffee cup, he said, "It must have been cold in the water."

"It was!" Forney assured him. "Bitter."

"I hope the doctor gave you something to warm you up."

"Nestor's too young to drink," Forney said, "but I had some."

"How's the pilot?"

"When me and Gamidge go out for them we bring them back in good shape."

"They tell me he wasn't able to climb into the sling."

"He fainted," Nestor explained.

The admiral put his cup down and said brusquely, "Keep bringing them back. Navy's proud of men like you."

The two enlisted men thanked the admiral and as they went down the ladder Tarrant heard Forney ask, "Nestor, why'd you stand there with your mouth shut, like a moron? Suppose he is mean. No reason to be scared of him."

"By the way," the admiral called. "Who was the pilot?"

"Brubaker, sir," Forney cried, unabashed.

The name struck Tarrant with visible force. Shaken, he slumped on to the leather settee and reached for some papers, which had been delivered aboard ship by dispatch plane that afternoon. "Brubaker!" He scanned the papers and called sick bay.

"Doctor," he asked, "any chance I could talk with Brubaker?"

A crisp voice snapped back, "Admiral, you know the man's suffered exposure."

"I know that, but there's an urgent matter and I thought that when he found himself in good shape . . ." He left it at that.

Then he thought of Brubaker, a twenty-nine-year-old civilian who had been called back into service against his will. At the start of the cruise he had been something of a problem, griping ceaselessly about the raw deal the Navy had given him. But gradually he had become one of the finest pilots. He still griped, he still damned the Navy, but he did his job. The admiral respected men like him.

But Brubaker had a special significance, for Admiral Tarrant had adopted the curious trick of selecting some young man of the age and rank his elder son would have attained had the Japs not shot him down while he was trying to launch a Navy fighter plane on the morning of Pearl Harbour. Tarrant found satisfaction in watching the behaviour of such pilots, for they added meaning to his otherwise lonely life. In the case of Harry Brubaker the trick had come close to reality. The Banshee pilot had the quick temper of his sons, the abiding resentments, the courage.

Tarrant therefore wanted desperately to go down into the ship and talk with Brubaker. Custom of the sea forbade this, however, for the captain of any ship must be supreme upon that ship, and even the flag admiral who chances to make his quarters aboard is a guest. So Admiral Tarrant was cooped up in flag plot, a tiny bedroom and a special bridge reserved for his use. That was his country and there he must stay.

There was a knock and the aide said, "Sir, it's Brubaker!"

The good-looking young man who stuck his head in wore two big bathrobes and heavy woollen socks, but even if he had worn dress uniform he would have looked like a civilian. He was a little overweight, his hair was a bit too long and he wasn't scared enough of the admiral. He was a young lawyer from Denver, Colorado, and it was clear that the quicker he got out of the Navy and back into a courtroom, the happier he'd be.

"You can scram now," he told the medical orderly

who had brought him up to the admiral's country.

"Come in, Brubaker," the admiral said stiffly. "Cup of coffee?" As he reached for the cup Brubaker didn't exactly stand at attention but the admiral said quickly, "Sit down, son. How's the Ban-shee take the water?"

"All right, if you fly her in."

"You keep the tail down?"

"I tried to. But as you approach the water every inclination is to land nose first."

"How was the helicopter?"

"That kid at the back deserves a medal."

"They handle the rescue O.K.?"

"This man Forney. When I looked up and saw that crazy hat I knew I had it knocked."

Admiral Tarrant took a deep gulp of coffee and studied Brubaker across the rim of his cup. He knew he oughtn't to discuss this next point with a junior officer but he had to talk with someone. "You say the green hat gave you a little extra fight?"

"You're scared. Then you see an opera hat coming at you out of nowhere. You relax."

"I would. Forney was in here a few minutes ago. Put me right at ease. Implied I was doing a fair job. You've got to respect a character like that. But the funny thing is . . ." He looked into his cup and said casually, "Captain of the ship's going to get rid of Forney. Says the hat's an outrage."

Brubaker didn't press for more details but he did say, "The pilots'd be unhappy."

The admiral, far back in his corner of the settee, studied the bundled-up young man and jabbed his coffee cup at him. "Harry, you're one of the finest pilots we have. You go in low, you do the job."

Brubaker grinned. He had a generous mouth and even teeth. His grin was attractive. "I appreciate that, sir."

"Then why don't you stay in the Navy? Great future."

The grin vanished. "You know what I think of the Navy, sir."

"Still bitter?"

"Still. I was unattached. The organized units were drawing pay. They were left at home. I was called. Sometimes I'm so bitter I could muck up the works on purpose."

"Why don't you?" Tarrant asked evenly.

"The catapult fires," Brubaker said. "There's that terrific moment and you're out front. On your way to Korea. So you say, 'What the heck? I'm here. Might as well do the job.'"

"Exactly. The President once rebuked me publicly. I'd had that big fight with the battleship boys because they didn't think aviation was important. Then the brawl with the Air Force who thought it too important. I know I'll never get promoted again. But you're here and you do the job."

"It would be easier to take if people back home were helping. But in Denver nobody even knew there was a war except my wife. Nobody supports this war."

"Every war's the wrong one," Tarrant said. "Could anything have been stupider than choosing Guadalcanal for a battleground? And look at us today!" With his cup he indicated on the chart where the permanent snow line, heavy with blizzards and sleet, hung a few miles to the east, while to the west the mountains of Korea hemmed in the ships. "Imagine the United States Navy tied down to a few square miles of ocean. The Marines are worse. Dug into permanent trenches. And the poor Air Force is the most misused of all. Bombers flying close air support. Militarily this war is a tragedy."

"Then why don't we pull out?" Brubaker asked bluntly.

Admiral Tarrant put his cup and saucer down firmly. "That's rubbish, son, and you know it. All through history free men have had to fight the wrong war in the wrong place. But that's the one they're stuck with. That's why, one of these days, we'll knock out those bridges at Toko-ri."

Flag plot grew silent. The two men stared at each other, for in

every war there is one target whose name stops conversation. You say that name and the men who must fly against that target sit mute and stare ahead. In Europe, during World War II, it was Ploesti or Peenemunde. In the Pacific it was Truk or the Yawata steel works. Now, to the Navy off Korea, it was the deadly concentration of mountains and narrow passes and festering gun emplacements that hemmed the vital bridges at Toko-ri. Here all Communist supplies to the central and eastern front assembled. Here the Communists were vulnerable.

Finally, Brubaker asked, "Do we have to knock out those particular bridges?"

"Yes, we must. I believe that some morning a bunch of Communist generals and commissars will be holding a meeting to discuss the future of the war. And a messenger will run in with news that the Americans have knocked out even the bridges at Toko-ri. And that little thing will convince the Reds that we'll never stop . . . never give in . . . never weaken in our purpose."

Again the two men studied each other and the admiral asked, "More coffee?" As Brubaker held his cup the old man said gruffly, "But I didn't call you here to discuss strategy. I'm supposed to reprimand you." With the coffee pot he indicated the file of papers on his desk.

"They crying because I wrecked that wheel?"

"No. Because of your wife."

The astonishment on Brubaker's face was so real that Tarrant was convinced the young man was unaware his wife and two daughters were in Japan. Nevertheless he had a job to do. "You knew she was in Japan?"

"She made it!" A look of such triumph and love broke over Brubaker's face that the admiral felt he ought to look away.

"You better hope you don't get a court martial," he said.

"I didn't tell her to come," Brubaker protested, but such a huge grin captured his face that he proved himself a liar.

Tarrant was tough. "How'd she get here without your help?"

"Politics. Her father used to be Senator from Wyoming."

Brubaker closed his eyes. He didn't care what happened. Nancy had made it. In the jet ready rooms he had known many pilots and their women troubles but he kept out of their discussions. He loved one girl. He had loved her with letters all through the last war in New Guinea and Okinawa. The day he got home he had married her. Now she was in Japan. Quietly he said to the admiral, "If she's broken a dozen rules to get here, it's all right by me. If my wife really is in Japan, I know why. She couldn't take America any longer. Watching people go on as if there were no war. We gave up our home, my job, the kids. Nobody else in Denver gave up anything."

This made the admiral angry. "Rubbish," he growled. "Burdens always fall on a few. You know that. Look at this ship. Every man aboard thinks he's a hero because he's in Korea. But only a few of you ever really bomb the bridges."

"But why my wife and me?"

"Nobody ever knows why he gets the dirty job. But any society is held together by the efforts and the sacrifices of only a few."

Brubaker couldn't accept this, Tarrant realized, and was getting mad in the way that had characterized the admiral's sons. Then he happened to think of his wife waiting in Japan and his anger left. "Look," he said. "It's sleeting." The two men went to the dark window and looked down upon the silent carrier, her decks fast with ice.

"It'll be all right by dawn," the old man said.

"You ever hear what the pilots say about you and the weather? 'At midnight he runs into storms but at take-off the deck's always clear, damn him.'"

The admiral laughed and said, "In three days you'll be in Japan. No more worry about take-offs for a while." He slapped the papers into a basket. "I'll tell Tokyo you had nothing to do with bringing your wife out here."

"Thank you, sir."

Quickly the admiral resumed his austere ways. Shaking Brubaker's hand, he said stiffly, "Mighty glad you were rescued promptly. Why don't you see if the surgeon can spare an extra nightcap."

As soon as Brubaker left, Tarrant thought, "His wife did right. If mine had come to Hawaii when our eldest son was killed, maybe things would have been different." But she had stayed at home, as Navy wives are expected to, and somewhere between the bombing of Pearl Harbour, where she lost one son, and the battle of Midway, where her second was killed trying to torpedo a Japanese carrier, her mind had lost focus and she had started to drink and forget people's names until slowly, like petals of apple blossoms in spring, fragments of her gentle personality had fallen away and she would sit for hours staring at a wall. . . .

It angered Tarrant when civilians like Brubaker suggested that he, a professional military man, could not understand war. Quite the contrary, he knew no civilian who understood war as thoroughly as he. Two sons and a home he had given to war. He had sacrificed the promotion of his career by insisting that America have the right weapons in case war came. And now in Korea, of the two hundred and seventy-two pilots who had initially served with him in his task force, thirty-one had been killed by Communist gunfire. Tonight he had come within two minutes of losing Brubaker, the best of the lot. No one need tell him what war was.

He was therefore doubly distressed when the people of the United States reacted like Brubaker: "Hold back the enemy but let someone else do it." He felt that his nation did not realize it was engaged in an unending war of many generations against resolute foes who were determined to pull it down. Some of the phases of this war would no doubt be fought without military battles. Whole decades might pass in some kind of peace but more likely the desultory battles would stagger on and from each community some young men would be summoned to do the fighting. They would be

like Brubaker, unwilling to join up but tough adversaries when there was no alternative. And no matter where they might be sent to serve, they would hate that spot as he and Brubaker hated Korea. It would always be the wrong place.

As if to demonstrate afresh how ridiculous Korea was, the aerologist appeared with the midnight weather reports from Siberia and China. Since these nations were not officially at war, their weather stations were required to broadcast their customary summaries, just as American and Japanese stations broadcast theirs. But since Korean weather was determined by what had happened in Siberia and China two days before, the admiral always had the tip-off and the enemy gained nothing.

"All wars are stupid," the old man grunted as he filed the Siberian reports. "But we'd better learn to handle the stupidity."

II: LAND

IT WAS the greatest liberty port in the world. It had more variety than Marseilles, more beauty than Valparaiso. Its prices were cheaper than New York's, its drinks better than Lisbon's. And there were far more pretty girls than in Tahiti.

It was Yokosuka, known through all the fleets of the world as Yu-koss-ka, and almost every man who had been there once had a girl waiting for him when he got back the second time. For in the cities near the port were millions of pretty girls who loved American sailors and their hilarious ways and their big pay cheques. It was a great liberty port.

Now as the *Savo* moved cautiously in towards her dock hundreds of these girls waited for their sailors and thousands were on hand for sailors they had not yet seen. Grim-faced guards kept the invaders away from the ship, but the girls gathered outside the gates, and among them on this windy, wintry day was one especially handsome girl of twenty dressed in plaid skirt from Los

Angeles, trim coat from Sears Roebuck, and jaunty cap from San Francisco. She wore her jet hair in braids and kept a laugh ready in the corners of her wide, black eyes. Her complexion was of soft gold and seemed to blush as some of the other girls caught a glimpse of the *Savo* and pretended they had seen her sailor.

"There's green hat!" they cried in Japanese.

"Don't you worry about green hat," she replied, pressing against the fence.

A comic among the girls put her right hand high above her head and swaggered as she had seen Mike Forney swagger on earlier leaves, and excitement grew as the *Savo* approached her berth. But this morning the girls would have to stand in the cold a long time, for there was a sharp wind off the sea and the lumbering bulk of the carrier presented so much freeboard for the wind to blow against that tugs with limited manœuvring space could not hold her from crashing into the quay. Emergency measures were clearly necessary. Accordingly the bull horn wailed the bad news: "F4U and AD pilots prepare for windmill."

Every propeller pilot cringed with disgust, but none showed such outrage as one of the jet men. Stocky, florid-faced, with a cigar jutting from his teeth, this forty-year-old Annapolis man whipped his bullet head and underslung jaw towards the bridge to see what stupid fool had ordered another windmill. As "Cag," commander of the air group, he was in charge of all planes and felt sickened as he watched the propeller jobs wheel into position. He was about to storm off the flight deck and raise a real row when Brubaker, standing with him, caught his arm and said, "Take it easy, Cag. You don't have to pay for the burned out engines."

"It's murder," the Cag groaned as his valuable prop planes were lashed down to the edge of the deck which threatened to crash against the quay. Their noses were pointed into the wind and their unhappy pilots sat in the cockpits and waited.

"Start engines," yowled the bull horn. Sixteen valuable engines revolved and sixteen sets of propeller blades tried to pull the big

carrier away from the quay; but the effort was not sufficient, and the *Savo* appeared certain to crash.

"Engines full speed," moaned the bull horn and the noise on deck became great as the props clawed into the air and magically held the great ship secure against the wind.

This caused no satisfaction among the propeller pilots, for since their planes were stationary on deck, with no wind rushing through to cool them, each engine was burning itself seriously. One plane mechanic rushed up to the Cag, cursing and crying, "They're wrecking the planes! Somebody's got to stop this!"

"I'm going to," Cag replied quietly and started for the admiral's plot, but before he could get there Brubaker hauled him down and the two men watched the propeller planes gradually ease up and allow the *Savo* to inch into her berth as gently as a fragile egg being laid into a basket by an old farm wife.

"Cut engines," rasped the bull horn and the Cag said bitterly, "Burn those engines up now and next trip over Korea the pilot bails out. This lousy captain thinks he has a new toy to play with."

"Save it for the hotel," Brubaker said. "Take it up with the admiral there." The Cag turned away, and as he did so Brubaker looked down from the carrier deck on to the quay and there stood Nancy and the two girls, dressed in winter coats and huddling together to protect one another from the wind. A great lump came into his throat and for a moment he could not wave or call, so that Mike Forney, who was marching up and down, impatient to burst ashore, asked, "That your family, sir?"

"Yes."

"It's worth bein' saved for them." He was staring raptly at Nancy and the two girls. "Hey, Mrs. Brubaker!" he roared. "Here's your hero."

Jumping up and down on her toes Nancy called excitedly to her daughters, "There's Daddy!" And they all threw him kisses.

Mike, watching with approval, said, "Right beyond that fence, sir, I got the same kind of reception waiting for me."

"You married?" Brubaker asked in astonishment. Somehow he had never thought of Mike as a family man.

"Not yet, but I may be. This shore leave."

"A girl who came out with the Occupation?"

"Japanese girl," Mike said, adjusting his green hat at a nightclub angle. At this point a messenger from the ship's executive officer arrived to inform Forney that the uniform of the day called for something more traditional and the insulted Irishman went below.

Immediately Brubaker wished that Mike had stayed, for the pain of seeing his women on the quay below was too great. They had come too far, they loved him too much and they reminded him too soon of icy Korea's waters clutching at him, trying to drag him down. For the first time in his life he became desperately afraid and wanted to leave the *Savo* at once, for he saw leading from the deck of the carrier, above the bodies of his wife and daughters, four bridges stretching far out to sea and they were the bridges of Toko-ri and he was afraid of them.

"Nancy," he whispered. "You should have stayed home."

As soon as the ship's lines were secured, he dashed down the gangplank to embrace his wife and as he did so his youngest daughter caught him by the leg and began to babble furiously. He bent down and listened to the excited little girl say, "I made a long plane ride and now I know what you do on the ship." Brubaker remembered the icy water and thought, "Thank God you don't know. And thank God your mummy doesn't, either." Then he laughed and caught the little girl in his arms and kissed her a lot and she said, "I like to fly planes like you, Daddy."

Attended by silent Nestor Gamidge, Mike Forney now strode to the gates of Yokosuka Naval Base, threw the marine on guard a nifty salute and stepped outside to freedom. He was a cocky figure, his fists jammed into his pea coat jacket, his uniform a trifle too tight, and it took him only a moment to find the girl. He stopped dead, thrust his big paw on to Gamidge's chest and cried, "Look

at her, Nestor! Best-dressed girl in Japan!" Then he gave a bellow, rushed forward and caught Kimiko in his arms and kissed her.

"Hey, Kimiko! Fleet's in!"

To his astonishment she pushed him away and said, "Not so fast, big boy. We got to talk." And she led him to a bar and started to explain the radically new situation.

For the officers of the *Savo* the Tokyo brass had reserved rest and recuperation rooms at the Fuji-san, a meandering Japanese hotel whose exquisite one-storied rooms and gardens hung on a mountain top which commanded a superb view of Fujiyama. In the old days this had been Japan's leading hotel but for the first six years after the war it served Americans only. Now, in the transition period between occupation and sovereignty, it had become a symbol of the new relationship between Japan and America: the choice rooms were still reserved for Americans but Japanese were welcome to use the hotel as before; so its spacious gardens, bent with pine and cherry, held both Japanese families who were enjoying luxury after long years of austerity and American military men savouring the same luxury after long months in Korea.

No one enjoyed the Fuji-san more than Admiral Tarrant. He arrived on the second day of liberty, changed into civilian clothes, gathered about him his young staff officers and forgot the rigours of Task Force 77. Other admirals, when they reached Japan, were whisked into Tokyo for press conferences where they sat on the edges of their chairs, trying to say exactly the right and innocuous thing. They must not, for example, admit that they were fighting Russians, nor must they even indicate that any of our men were being killed. In this special war there were special rules to keep the people back in America from becoming worried.

Admiral Tarrant was not the man for such interviews. The Navy had tried it once and he had said bluntly, "We're fighting Russian guns, Russian radar, Russian planes and Russian submarines. And a hell of a lot of our men are being killed by this

Russian equipment, manned by Russian experts." Headquarters in Tokyo had blown a gasket and the entire interview was classified top secret and the Navy was advised that whereas Tarrant might be terrific as a task force commander, "send him to some good hotel when he gets ashore . . . and keep him there."

Now he lounged in the bar and watched a group of pilots pestering Beer Barrel. Ten minutes after the *Savo* docked, the landing signal officer had grabbed a bar stool and he had sat there for almost twenty-nine hours, lapping up the wonderful Japanese beer.

"Look at him!" one Banshee pilot cried. "He's goin' crazy. Doesn't know whether to claim Texas has the biggest midgets in the world or the smallest."

Four jet men, themselves pretty well hung over, formed a solemn circle about Beer Barrel and began to chant the carrier pilot's version of the Twenty-Third Psalm:

The Beer Barrel is my shepherd

I shall not crash.

*He maketh me to land on flat runways: he bringeth me
in off the rough waters.*

He restoreth my confidence.

*Yea, though I come stalling into the groove at sixty
knots, I shall fear no evil: for he is with me; his arm
and his paddle, they comfort me.*

*He prepareth a deck before me in the presence of mine
enemies; he attacheth my hook to the wire; my deck
space runneth over.*

Admiral Tarrant laughed at the nonsense. He poured himself some inky black coffee and looked into the gardens, where he saw Harry Brubaker's lovely wife and her two daughters and they reminded him of what wars were all about. "You don't fight to protect warships or old men. Like the book says, you fight to save your civilization. And so often it seems that civilization is composed mainly of the things women and children want."

He grew glum then, for Mrs. Brubaker had told him at lunch, "If the government dared to ask women like me, this stupid war would end tomorrow." There lay the confusion. These bright, lovely women, whose husbands had to do the fighting, wanted to end the war on any terms; but these same women, whose children would have to live through servitude or despair should America ever be occupied, would be precisely the ones who would goad their men into revitalization and freedom. So Admiral Tarrant never argued with women because in their own deep way they were invariably right. No more war . . . but no humiliation. He hoped to see the day when this difficult programme could be attained.

But a more immediate problem was at hand, for the Cag stormed across the garden, his cigar jutting belligerently ahead like a mine-sweeper. The tough airman was known throughout the Navy as a fire-ball and this time Tarrant, himself an airman, knew the Cag was right. The *Savo's* use of windmill had been intemperate, a perversion of aircraft engines. But a deeper concern was involved, so the admiral prepared to squelch the hot-head.

For the Navy high command had secretly asked Tarrant to submit a concurrent report upon this demon flier when his Korean duty ended. It was hinted that a bright and brash young man was needed for rapid promotion to a command of real authority and Tarrant guessed that the Cag was being weighed as an eventual task force commander.

He could recall a day in 1945 when Admiral Halsey had commanded a supreme force built of five components each twice as large as the present Task Force 77. It was so vast it blackened the sea with more than fifty carriers. It stretched for miles and ultimately sank the entire Japanese fleet. One brain had commanded that incredible force and it behoved the United States to have other men ready for the job, should such a task force again be needed.

Perhaps the Cag was such a man. A lot of Navy people thought so but no one knew for sure whether he had the two ultimate

requirements for vast command: a resolute spirit and due regard for human life.

The Cag jammed his cigar through the door and asked, "May I speak with you, sir?"

"Sit down. Whisky?"

"Please."

"What's wrong?"

The Cag sailed right in. "These lazy carrier captains. They're burning up our engines."

Tarrant thought he'd better let the fire-ball have it right between the eyes. Staring coldly he asked, "You think you could handle a carrier better?"

This stunned the Cag and he fumbled for a moment. Fortunately, the bar boy arrived with his drink and he grabbed for it. "You not having one, sir?" he asked.

"The doctor made me lay off," the admiral explained coldly. "What's your major complaint against the carrier captains?"

The veins stood out on the Cag's bullet head, but he stamped his cigar out and said firmly, "They shouldn't burn up our propeller planes."

"How would you berth a big ship against the wind?"

"In the old days I would have waited. But whatever I did I wouldn't run a lashed-down engine at top speed."

Admiral Tarrant stared impersonally at Fujiyama, the wonderful mountain, and although he wanted to agree with Cag, he pondered precisely what question would most completely throw this young hot-head off balance. Finally he settled on: "So you'd have a group of complaining F4U pilots dictate naval procedure?"

Again the Cag was staggered. Such treatment threw him off balance, for he knew Tarrant's power in the Navy. The old man may have queered his own promotion but he was still known as the incorruptible and his judgment on the promotions of others was prized.

"Sir, I . . ." He fumbled for words and then blurted out with

startling force, "Sir, an engine has only so many good hours. If you burn them up on deck . . ." He fumbled again and ended weakly, "Why can't they use half power?"

The admiral turned slowly away from Fujiyama and asked bleakly, "Do you consider an F4U engine more valuable than a carrier?"

The Cag retreated. "What I was trying to say . . ."

"Another whisky?"

The Cag needed something to restore his confidence but reasoned that if the old man was in an evil mood he'd better not accept two drinks, so he said lamely, "Thank you, sir, but I have a reservation for one of the sulphur baths."

"They're fun," the admiral said mournfully and when the Cag awkwardly excused himself, the old man sagged into a real depression, for he found it ugly to watch a promising young commander back away from what he knew was right.

"Well," Tarrant grumbled, "he's popular. He'll be able to wangle a desk job. But he's no good for command. I'll have to say so when we get home." *receipt*

Brubaker and his pretty wife approached now and it was apparent she had been crying. "She wants to talk to you," Brubaker said with the air of a young husband who hopes somebody else can say the magic word which he has been unable to find. Tarrant invited them to join him.

"My husband tells me you can explain why this war is necessary," she said. "I sure wish somebody would."

"This war isn't necessary," Tarrant said. "That is, it wouldn't be in a sensible world. But for the present it is inevitable." He poured himself some coffee and waited.

"If it's inevitable, why should the burden fall on just a few of us—especially those with homes and families like us?" Nancy pressed.

"I don't know. You take the other night when your husband

" Before he could tell of the ditching he saw Brubaker make

an agonizing sign indicating that Nancy knew nothing of the crash and he salvaged the sentence by concluding, "Your husband bombed a bridge. Because he's one of the best pilots in the Navy he knocked out two spans. He didn't have to do it. He could have veered away from the bridge and no one would ever have known. But some men don't veer away. They hammer on, even though the weight of war has fallen unfairly on them. I always think of such men as the voluntary men."

Nancy fought back her tears and asked, "So until the last bridge is knocked out a few men have to do the fighting? The voluntary men?"

Before he could reply the bar boy hurried up and asked, "Is Lieutenant Brubaker here?" The boy led Harry to a back door of the hotel where Nestor Gamidge stood.

"I'm sure glad to see you, lieutenant," he gasped. His blues were ripped and his face was heavily bruised.

"What's up?"

"Mike's been in a terrific fight, sir. He's in jail in Tokyo."

"What happened?"

"His girl's marryin' a bo'sun from the *Essex*."

"You mean his . . . Japanese girl?"

"Yes, and if you don't come in he'll be locked up permanent."

Tokyo was sixty miles away and to rescue Forney in person would consume many hours of leave that he might otherwise spend with his family. Brubaker said, "I'll phone the M.P.'s."

"Callin' won't help, sir. Mike clobbered two M.P.'s as well as the gang from the *Essex*."

"You two take on the whole town?"

"Yes, sir."

Brubaker made up his mind abruptly. "I'll help."

He hurried back to where Nancy and the admiral sat and said quickly, "Admiral Tarrant, will you please see that Nancy gets dinner? There's been trouble in Tokyo and I . . ."

"Oh, no!" Nancy protested.

"Admiral, it's Mike Forney."

"Drunken brawl?"

"Girl threw him over."

Nancy pleaded. "On our second night, why do you have to get mixed up with drunken sailors?"

Brubaker kissed his wife and said tenderly, "Darling, if Mike were in China I'd have to help."

He ran down the long hallway to change into uniform.

Nancy looked beseechingly at Admiral Tarrant and pleaded, "Who's this Mike Forney he thinks more of than his own children?" Her eyes filled with tears and she fumbled for a handkerchief.

The admiral studied her closely and asked, "If you were freezing to death in the sea and a man brought his helicopter right over your head and rescued you, wouldn't you help that man if he got into trouble?"

Nancy stopped crying and asked, "Did Harry crash at sea?"

"Yes."

She looked down at her white knuckles and unclasped her hands. When she regained control Admiral Tarrant asked, "Has Harry told you about the bridges? At Toko-ri?"

"No. He never talks about the war. Is he involved with the bridges?"

"Yes. When we go back to sea, your husband must bomb those bridges."

In a whisper she asked, "Why do you tell me this?"

He replied, "In 1942 I had a daughter as sweet as you. She was my daughter-in-law, really. Then my son was killed at Midway trying to torpedo a Jap carrier. She never recovered. For a while she tried to make love with every man in uniform. Then she grew to loathe herself and attempted suicide. What she's doing now or where she is I don't know, but once she was my daughter."

Nancy Brubaker could hardly force herself to speak.

"You think that if things went wrong at the bridges . . . I'd be like . . ."

"Perhaps. If we refuse to acknowledge what we're involved in, terrible consequences sometimes follow."

A strange man was telling her that war meant the death of people and that if she were not prepared, her courage might fall apart, and instinctively she knew this to be true. "I understand what you mean," she said hoarsely.

Beer Barrel lay at last sprawled upon his arms at the end of the bar, his face pressed against the polished wood. Nancy pointed to him. "Will he fly against the bridges, too?" she asked.

When the admiral turned to survey the mammoth Texan his lean, Maine face broke into a relaxed smile. "That one?" he said reflectively. "He flies against his bridges every day."

WHEN Brubaker and Gamidge reached Tokyo, night had already fallen and there was slush upon the wintry streets that lined the black moat of the emperor's palace. At the provost marshal's office a major asked sourly, "Why you interested in a troublemaker like Forney?"

"He's from my ship."

"Not any more."

"Major," Brubaker asked directly, "couldn't you please let me handle this?"

"A mad Irishman? Who wrecks a dance hall?"

"But this man has saved the lives of four pilots."

"Look, lieutenant! I got nineteen monsters in the bird cage. Every one of them was a hero in Korea. But in Tokyo they're monsters."

He gave a good look at Nestor now and shouted to a sergeant, "Is this the runt who slugged you?"

"Listen, major!" Harry pleaded. "The other night I ditched my plane at sea. These two men saved my life. This runt, as you called him, jumped into the ocean."

The major was completely unimpressed. Staring at Nestor he said scornfully, "I suppose the ocean tore his clothes. Did he get his face all chopped up jumping into a wave?"

"All right, there was a brawl."

"A brawl! A brawl is when maybe six guys throw punches. These two monsters took on all of Tokyo."

It was apparent to Brubaker that pleading along normal lines would get nowhere, so he asked bluntly, "You married, major?"

"Yep."

"Tonight's the second night in eight months that I've seen my wife and kids. I left them at Fuji-san to get Mike out of jail. That's what I think of these two men."

The major stared at the docket listing Mike's behaviour. "You willin' to cough up eighty dollars for the damage he did?"

"I'd pay eight hundred dollars."

"He's yours, but you ain't gettin' no prize."

A guard produced Mike Forney, his face a nauseating blue in contrast to the green scarf. "She's marryin' an ape from the *Essex*," he said pitifully.

"I suppose you tried to stop her."

"I would of stopped the ape, but he had helpers."

When they reached the narrow streets where hundreds of Japanese civilians hurried past, Mike begged, "Talk with her, please, lieutenant. She might listen to you."

He led Brubaker to a dance hall called The Pirates' Den, built in the shape of a Chinese junk. There was an open elevator which endlessly travelled from the first floor to the fifth bearing an eleven-piece jazz band supplying five different dance floors. The strangest adornment of the place was a mock plane, piloted by an almost nude girl who flew from floor to floor delivering cold beer.

The place was so ugly, so noisy and so crammed with chattering girls that Brubaker wondered how anyone had known a riot was under way. And then he met Kimiko, Mike's one-time love. She

was the first Japanese girl he had ever spoken to and he was unprepared for her beauty. Her teeth were remarkably white and her smile was warm. He understood at once why Mike wanted her, and when she rose to extend her hand and he saw her slim perfect figure in a princess evening dress which Mike had ordered from New York, he concluded that she warranted a riot.

"I very sorry, lieutenant," she explained softly, "but while Mike at sea I lose my heart to *Essex* man. *Essex* not at sea."

"But Mike's a fine man," Brubaker argued. "No girl could do better than Mike."

Kimiko smiled and plaintively insisted, "I know Mike good man. But I lose my heart."

Things started to go black for Mike again and he shouted, "Not in my dress, you don't lose it!" And he clawed at the dress which represented more than two months' pay.

Kimiko began to scream and the owner of The Pirates' Den blew a shrill whistle and prudent Nestor Gamidge said, "We'd better start runnin' now."

"Not without this dress!" Mike bellowed.

Nestor handled that by clouting Mike a withering blow to the chin, under which the tough Irishman crumpled. Then they grabbed him by the arms and worked their way out a back door before the M.P.'s could get to them.

Gently they took Mike to the enlisted men's quarters, where Gamidge put the rocky Irishman to bed. When this was done, the little Kentuckian laboriously scratched a note and tucked it into the lieutenant's fist: "We owe you eighty dollars. Mike and Nestor." Then Brubaker started the long trip back to the Fuji-san and his wife.

It was nearly three in the morning when he reached the hotel, but Nancy was awake and when he climbed into bed she clutched him to her and whispered, "I'm ashamed of the way I behaved. Admiral Tarrant told me about Mike Forney."

"I wish he hadn't. But don't worry. Nobody ever crashes twice."

There was a long silence and she kissed him as if to use up all the kisses of a lifetime. Then she controlled her voice to make it sound casual and asked, "What are the bridges at Toko-ri?" She felt him grow tense.

Suddenly, in the dark room, he wanted to share with his wife his feelings about the bridges. "I haven't really seen them," he whispered. "But I've studied pictures. There are four bridges, two for railways, two for trucks, and they're vital. Big hills protect them and lots of guns. Every hill has lots of Russian guns."

"Are Russians fighting in Korea?"

"Yes. They do all the radar work. We have only two approaches to the bridges. The valley has one opening to the east, another to the west. When we bomb the bridges we must dive in one end and climb out the other." He hesitated and added quickly, "At Toko-ri there is more flak than anywhere in Germany last time. Because the Communists know where you have to come in from. And where you have to go out. So they sit and wait for you."

They whispered until dawn, a man and his wife in a strange land talking of a war so terrible that for them it equalled any in history. Towards morning Nancy could control her courage no longer and she began to cry. In her despondency she whispered, "Harry, do you remember where we were when we decided to get married?"

"Sure I remember. The Frontier Days in Cheyenne."

"Well, just before we came over here I took the girls up there and the awful part was that everything was exactly the way it was in 1946. Nobody gave a damn about Korea. In all America nobody gives a damn."

When the morning sun was bright and the girls had risen, Harry Brubaker and his wife still had no explanation of why they had been chosen to bear the burden of the war.

Heartsick, they led their daughters down to one of the hotel's sulphur baths, where they locked the door, undressed and plunged into the pool. The girls loved it and splashed nakedly back and

forth, teasing shy Nancy because she wouldn't take off all her clothes, so she slipped out of her underthings and joined them.

Suddenly the locked door opened and a Japanese entered. He bowed low to both Nancy and Harry, smiled at the girls and started to undress. "Hey!" Harry cried. "We reserved this!" But the man understood little English and bowed to accept Harry's greeting. Then he opened the door and admitted his wife and two teen-age daughters, who laid aside their kimonos. Harry, blushing madly, tried to protest again but the man said with painstaking care, "Number one! Good morning!" and each of his pretty daughters smiled and said musically, "Good morning, sir!"

"*Ohio gozaimasu!*" shouted the Brubaker girls, using a phrase they had acquired from their nurse. This pleased the Japanese family and everyone laughed gaily and then the man bowed again. Ceremoniously, father first, the family entered the pool.

By now Harry and Nancy were more or less numb with astonishment, but the quiet beauty of the surroundings and the charm of the Japanese family were too persuasive to resist. Harry, trying not to stare at the pretty girls, smiled at the Japanese man, who swam leisurely over, pointed to one of the Brubaker girls and asked, "Belong you?"

Harry nodded, whereupon the man introduced his own daughters. "Teiko, Takako," he said. They smiled and held out their hands and somehow the bitterness of the long night's talking died away. The two families intermingled and the soft waters of the bath united them. In 1944 Harry had hated the Japanese and had fought against them. But the years had passed, the hatreds had dissolved and on this wintry morning he caught some sense in the twisted and conflicting things men are required to do.

Then he sort of cracked his neck, for he saw Nancy. His shy wife had paddled to the other side of the pool and was talking with the Japanese man. "We'd better hurry or we'll miss breakfast," Harry said, and for the rest of his stay they enjoyed themselves and never spoke of Korea.



Shore leave ended in one of those improbable incidents which made everyone proud he served aboard a good ship like the *Savo*.

Admiral Tarrant went aboard at noon and towards four Beer Barrel staggered up the gangplank with his two golf bags filled with beer. Brubaker had obtained permission for Nancy to see his quarters but when she found how astonishingly small the room was and how her husband slept with his face jammed under two steam pipes she said she felt penned in and would rather stay on deck.

In the meantime hundreds of sailors and their Japanese girls had crowded into Yokosuka and in the lead were Mike Forney and Nestor Gamidge, accompanied by seven girls from the dance halls. "I never knew there were so many girls," Nestor said to one of the plane captains. "Best thing ever happened to Mike was losing Kimiko to the ape from the *Essex*."

Mike agreed. When he had kissed his girls goodbye he swung

on to the quay, elbows out, and pointed to the *Savo*: "Greatest flat top in the fleet." Then he stopped dead for he saw that the *Essex* was alongside and there stood beautiful Kimiko, wearing the expensive plaid jacket he had bought her. She was kissing her ape from the *Essex* and things went black. Clenching his fists, Mike lunged towards the lovers, but little Nestor grabbed him.

Mike stopped, slapped himself on the head and muttered, "Sure, what's one girl?" With grandiloquent charm he approached Kimiko, kissed her hand and said loudly, "The flower of Japan." Then he grabbed the *Essex* man warmly and proclaimed, "The flower of the fleet. The best man won. Bless you, my children."

Then everything fell apart. For some loud mouth in the *Essex* yelled derisively, "And we could lick you bums in everything else, too."

Mike whirled about. Blood surged into his throat, and he lunged at the *Essex* man and slugged him furiously, shouting, "You lousy ape!"

Six *Essex* men leaped to defend their shipmate, stumpy Nestor Gamidge rallied *Savo* men and soon M.P. whistles were screeching like sparrows in spring and there was a growing mêlée with men in blue dropping all over the place. Mike, seeing himself about to be deluged by *Essex* reinforcements, grabbed a chunk of wood and let the ape have it across the ear, laying him flat. At this Kimiko started to scream in Japanese and Mike tried to pull off the pretty plaid jacket, bellowing, "Go ahead and marry him. But not in my clothes." Three *Essex* men, gallant to the end, knocked him silly.

The captain of the *Savo* witnessed this disgraceful riot and determined on the spot to get rid of Mike Forney. But Admiral Tarrant, surveying the brawl from flag bridge, thought, "I'd hate to see the day when men were afraid to mix it up for pretty girls." He called for his glasses and studied Kimiko, who knelt over her *Essex* man, and all the sailors aboard the *Savo* and the officers, too, were a little prouder of their ship.

III: SKY

THE SUN had to be well up or the photographs wouldn't be any good, so it was nearly 0945 when Harry Brubaker's jet catapulted violently across the prow of the *Savo* and far into the sky towards Korea. Ahead of him streaked a single Banshee with an extraordinary nose containing nine broad windows through which heavy cameras would record the bridges of Toko-ri.

While the *Savo* was in Yokosuka, other carriers had been assigned to photograph the target but they had failed. When Cag bent his bullet head over their muddy films he growled, "What's the matter? They afraid to go down low? We'll show 'em how to take pictures," and he assigned himself the dangerous mission, choosing Brubaker to fly protective cover.

Now, as the two Banshees streaked towards higher altitudes Brubaker concerned himself with trivial details: "Lay off those even altitudes. Use twenty-five thousand three hundred. Makes it just that much tougher for the anti-aircraft crews. And remember that when Cag goes down for the pictures, keep three thousand feet above him."

Then, in the perpetually mysterious way, when he had climbed into the higher atmosphere he experienced the singing beauty of a jet as it sped through the vast upper reaches of the world. Sea and sky fell away and he was aloft in the soaring realm of the human spirit.

It was terrible and supreme to be there, whistling into the morning brilliance, streaking ahead so fast that the overwhelming scream of his engines never quite caught up. In this moment of exhilaration he peered into the limitless reaches of the upper void and felt the surging sensation that overtakes every jet pilot: "I'm out front."

Then, as his eyes swept the empty sky in casual patterns, he

uttered a stunned cry, "My God! There it is!" But when he looked directly at what he had seen it vanished, so he returned to scanning and from the corner of his eye he saw it again, one of the supreme sights of creation: Fujiyama in morning sunlight towering above the islands of Japan.

The cone was perfect, crowned in dazzling white, and the sides fell away like the soft ending of a sigh, and somewhere on the nether slope Nancy and the girls were waiting.

Dead ahead lay the mountains of Korea, bold and blunt and ugly. Tortured and convoluted, they were the mountains of pain, the hills of death. There was no sense in them and they ran in crazy directions. Their crests formed no significant pattern, their valleys led nowhere, and running through them there were no discernible watersheds or spacious plains. Hidden among them, somewhere to the west, cowered the bridges of Toko-ri, gun-rimmed and waiting. Brubaker knew the guns would be waiting, for as the Banshees crossed the coastline, a signal battery in Won-san fired and he could follow the course of other gun bursts across Korea.

Now the day's hard work began. As soon as the Banshees came in range of Communist guns, Cag began to descend in swift jinking dips and dives to confuse ground gunners, never staying on either course or altitude for longer than fifteen seconds. This threw a special responsibility on Brubaker who stayed aloft, weaving back and forth lest some stray MiG try to pounce upon the preoccupied photographic plane. So imperceptible was Cag's silvery slim Banshee as it skimmed across the mountain tops that Brubaker was taxed to keep his eye upon it.

At Yangdok ground fire exploded at almost the right altitude to catch the photographic plane, so the jets increased speed to five hundred and sixty, jinking violently. On the horizon rose the peaks that guarded Toko-ri.

Each was pock-marked with many circular red depressions in the snow. These were the gun emplacements and in swift estimate Bru-

baker decided there must be more than sixty. Lower were gaunt walled nests for the huge five-inch guns, a single shell from which could pulverize a plane before it fell to earth. And deep within the hills, hiding along the river, were the four bridges. On this first fleeting glance he noticed that the two historic bridges were on tall stone pillars and decidedly vulnerable, but that the two emergency alternates were extraordinarily low, scarcely clearing the water.

But most significant of all was one solemn fact: to get to the bridges you really did have to fly in one end of a valley, traverse it and fly out the other end. Brubaker swallowed and thought, "They got you lined up going and coming. No wonder they saved this one till last."

At that instant Cag started his bold run into the western entrance to the valley. Pushing his nose down into a forty-degree dive, he screamed along the shimmering river, held courageously to the hairline railway tracks, and roared upon the bridges at five hundred and eighty miles an hour. More than two hundred Communist guns fired at the streaking Banshee, but it howled straight on, its cameras grinding, making no concession to the fire. Cag had one mission only, to bring back photographs, and he ignored everything else.

At last he pulled away from the mortal pit and with a sickening upward twist sped off to the north.

For a moment Brubaker lost the sleek Banshee as it fled to the hills for rendezvous. In some anxiety he cast his eyes swiftly left and right and thus caught a fleeting glimpse of the plane in the corner of his eyes. Quickly rotating his vision in that area he gradually pinpointed the photographic plane, twisting and turning towards the safer hills. He had the sensation of spying upon an animal retreating to some sheltered valley after a wounding fight.

"Drop down and look me over," Cag's voice said in his ear-phones. "My tail section O.K.?"

Brubaker passed under the long-nosed jet and studied the fuselage minutely. "Nothing visible," he reported.

"Back we go," Cag said.

The photographic jet heeled over in a right turn, jinked to a lower altitude and went into a paralyzing dive. Out of the sun it streaked with blazing speed, but the Communist gunners were waiting and in monomaniac fury they poured their fire upon the wraithlike Banshee as it screamed upon them. It seemed impossible that Cag could writhe his way through such fire but he bore on, clicking his shutters at the doomed bridges.

From aloft Brubaker followed this incredible mission and wanted to be down there with his commander, but the instant this thought came to mind it was dispelled by the vision he had seen at Yokosuka: four bridges reaching out into space far above the heads of his wife and daughters, and he grew afraid; for he knew that tomorrow as the sun came up he would be pushing his own overloaded Banshee down upon the real bridges. It was then that the great fear came upon him, the one he would not be able to dispel.

Then he heard Cag cry, "Well, home we go."

Ecstatically the two jets zoomed to twenty-six thousand.

Far below them the savage, cheated mountains of Korea began to assume a beautiful countenance. Gone were the tortured profiles and the senseless confusion, for with the bridges of Toko-ri behind him, Brubaker saw Korea with a kindlier eye. To the north sprawling reservoirs glistened like great brooches, holding the hills together, while beyond the upcoming range of mountains lay the vast blue sea, bearing somewhere upon its bosom the task force, that fair circle of home, with Beer Barrel waiting on the after deck.

But when they reached home there was dismal news. "You heard the hot scoop?" Harry's plane captain asked as soon as Brubaker was out of the cockpit. "Forney and Gamidge are being sent to the barge."

"The barge?" This was a scow stationed near the Korean coast, and helicopter men with that duty lived miserably, engaged in one dangerous land mission after another.

A destroyer moved in then and the last the *Savo* saw of Mike Forney was when he climbed into the bo'sun's chair, sporting green top hat, green scarf and Irishman's pipe. "I'll send you the eighty bucks, sir," he yelled.

Brubaker didn't care if the captain was watching. He grabbed the disgraced man's hand and said, "Take care of yourself, Mike. Pilots need you."

"I go for rough duty," Mike yelled, clutching his hat as the lines started to draw him over to the destroyer.

The new helicopter pilot was an officer, a college kid and no doubt competent, but the jet men and propeller crews knew that flying off the *Savo* would be a little tougher now.

The fear that was reborn when Brubaker watched Cag dive into the valley at Toko-ri grew all that day, augmented by the gloom of Mike Forney's dismissal and the briefing. After dinner, in the crowded ready room, the intelligence officer had passed around marked copies of the photographs made that morning and said, "Take-off at 0900. By then the sun will have driven ground fog out of the valley. Keep well south of the guns at Majon-ni. Cag, you tell them about the approach."

Cag, cigar in mouth, said briefly, "We'll go in low. We'll go in three times. And we'll go in from the east each time. When we're through, there won't be any more bridges."

There were some questions and then Cag handed them the cold dope. He held his cigar in his left hand and said, "Marty, you take your four men in at a thousand feet to suppress flak. I'll follow with my four at twelve hundred. Brubaker, you mop up."

Tightly Brubaker gripped the arms of his chair and fought back his fear. He couldn't fly this mission. He couldn't take his jet inside that blazing rim of hills. His old bitterness at having been called back into service sneaked up into his throat and corroded his courage. Frantically, as if afraid he might break down before his peers, he rose and hurried out.

Stumbling to his own quarters he slammed the door shut and

climbed up into his bunk under the steam pipes. In uncontrolled panic, there in the dark room, he cast about for some way to avoid the strike against the bridges.

"I'll go see the doc. I'll just walk in and announce, 'I've lost my nerve.'" Impulsively he climbed down and started for the door. Then he stopped and laughed nervously at himself.

For the Navy had worked out the perfect way to handle situations like this. Suppose you went in and said you were too jittery to fly. The doc simply said, "O.K. Don't fly." It was so easy that a man thought a hundred thousand times before he used that dodge. He stood alone, sweating, in his dark room and recalled Cag's flight into the valley, and almost without knowing it he uttered the tricky words that bind a man to duty, those simple words that send men in jet planes against overwhelmingly protected bridges: "If Cag can fly that flak, so can I." That was what kept the Navy system working. You could weasel out any time, but within you lived the memory of other men no less afraid than you who were willing to tackle the dirty jobs. So you stuck.

He felt ashamed of himself and turned on the light but was appalled by his own grey and ashen face in the mirror. "Get hold of yourself!" he commanded. Methodically, as if attention to some one job would restore his courage, he began a letter to Nancy and with great composure told her how much he loved the children and of how he longed for the days of peace when they could all go camping again in the Rockies behind Denver. He ended with a paragraph in which he described in detail the suit she had worn that day on the quay at Yokosuka. "It looked very expensive," he wrote, "and I was amazed when you said you had made it yourself."

But when he crawled back into his bunk things were worse than before and like a stabbing agony in the darkness he cried, "Why does it have to be me?"

Through the long night he wrestled with his fear. Towards morning he was taken with frenzy and leaped from his bunk,

rushing down the passageway to report his loss of nerve, but he never reached the doctor. A shattering sound halted him and in the gloomy darkness he whispered, "They're launching the dawn planes. It won't be long now." Then the catapult fired again and he remembered something Forney had once said and he stumbled down the ladder to the port catapult room, breaking in among the crew and crying, "Where did Mike Forney stand?"

"Here."

"Is that the piston he told me about?"

"Yep."

Before Brubaker could ask more questions the engine fired and from its nest forward eleven tons of gleaming metal roared back with appalling force to stop a few inches from his face. Involuntarily he stumbled backwards. The enlisted men laughed.

"Forney stood stock-still," they said.

Mike had explained that he came to the catapult room whenever his nerves were getting tight and the explosion of that enormous piston right into his face cured him. "If a guy can take that, he can take anything," Mike had said, but before Brubaker got set the monstrous machine fired again and that tremendous gleaming force sprang at him. He fell back.

"Takes a real idiot to stay put," a crewman shouted.

Brubaker rooted himself to a position from which he could not be budged, and like a frightened bull-fighter he mumbled to himself, "This time I keep my feet here." While he watched, the mighty piston leaped at him, then stopped with a powerful uuuuush less than four inches from his face.

The catapult crew applauded and said, "Pretty soon now you'll be as crazy as Forney."

"Is that bad?" Brubaker asked. Briskly he returned through the darkened ship and climbed into his bunk. "Well," he assured himself, "at least I'm not yellow." But immediately he was more afraid: "Because you know the catapult's got to stop. But the guns at Toko-ri never do."

When the messenger called at 0700 he found Brubaker awake and sweating, staring at the steam pipes. He reported to the ward-room bleary-eyed and Cag asked, "What were you doing in the catapult room last night?"

There was no use kidding anybody so he replied, "I was jittery."

"Does sticking your face in the piston cure that?"

"Yes."

Cag knew he should have left it at that but this mission was too important so he asked, "You want to ground yourself? Because today we've got to do a first-rate professional job."

"That's what I'm here for."

"Good. I put you in the follow-through spot because I know that if my gang miss the bridges, you'll get 'em."

"I'm going to."

At 0730 the pilots moved into the cold ready room where the worst part of the flight took place. Twelve men began to pile on to themselves such a mass of encumbrances that soon they waddled like pigs, completely muscle-bound and sweating from every pore.

Brubaker started in shorts. First he climbed into long-handled woollen underwear, then into a skin-tight G suit, which applied pressure on vital parts of his body so that when he pulled out of steep dives the enormous drag of gravity, the G's, would not suck all the blood from his head. He covered the G suit with inch-thick quilted underwear, two pairs of short bulky socks and a third which reached his knees. Then came the rough part, for even though the watertight rubber poopysuit had already saved his life once, getting into it was always murder.

Since the neck band had to be tight to keep out freezing water and since no zippers were allowed, he had to get into the poopysuit in a special way. A long slash ran from the left shoulder across the chest and down to the right hip and he climbed in through this hole, pushing his feet down into the massive boots and his head up through the impossibly tight neck band. Then he grabbed the two flaps of extra rubber along the slash and rolled them to-

gether into a bulky, watertight seal which fattened him like a watermelon. And as soon as he closed this final seal he began to sweat and every minute he wore the poopy suit he was smelly and wet and uncomfortable. From time to time he pulled the neck band out and blew fresh air inside to get some relief. That's why the ready room was kept so cold.

After the poopy suit came the survival vest, the pistol, the bulky Mae West, the hip knife, three cumbersome pairs of gloves, golden crash helmet, oxygen connection, harness straps and heavy goggles. Weighed down like some primeval monster, he waddled to the escalator which lifted him to the flight deck—another trick to keep down sweat—where an enlisted man handed him the board for clamping on to his knee with navigation data, codes, plots and all kinds of miscellaneous papers.

Even when he climbed into his jet there was more gear, so complicated that his plane captain had to crouch behind him and adjust safety belt, shoulder harness, ejection gear, microphone cord and oxygen supply.

Harry Brubaker, who was about to soar into space with a freedom no previous men in history had known, was loaded down with such burdens that he felt he must suffocate.

As Brubaker adjusted himself to the cockpit he was hemmed in on left and right by more than seventy-five switches and controls. Directly facing him were sixteen instruments and thirteen more switches. He thought, "If there were one more thing to do..." He never finished the sentence for the mighty catapult fired and he was shot into space, where the suffocating paraphernalia and the maze of switches seemed to fall away and he roared into the upper blue, tied down only by his cancerous fear of the bridges at Toko-ri.

As it happened, however, he was not to see those bridges that day, for at Wonsan the radio crackled and he heard Cag's disappointed voice, "Weather scout reports target closed in. Ground fog. Stand by for alternate instructions."

When Brubaker heard this life-saving news he shouted, "A reprieve! I knew I wasn't meant to tackle the bridges today."

But ground fog did not save him completely for in the next minute Cag received a radio message from Admiral Tarrant, and instantly the twelve jets stopped in mid-flight, almost as if they were a flock of pheasant searching for a grain field. Abruptly they turned south, heading for the mountainous battle front, where in the trenches a new emergency had arisen.

At dawn that morning a battalion of South Korean infantry had been hit by a murderous concentration of Communist power and it had become apparent that the Koreans would be annihilated unless air support could be provided. A United States Army liaison officer called the United States Army command in Seoul, who got hold of an Air Force General, who said he had no planes but would try to get some from a Marine General, who suggested that Admiral Tarrant, far out to sea, might have some to spare. The inquiry arrived just as the early-morning weather plane was reporting: "Toko-ri closed in but good. Much ground fog."

Tarrant replied, "One flight of twelve heavily armed jets available. Already air-borne."

Seoul immediately ordered, "Proceed Roundelay. Operate as he directs."

Thus by means of field telephone, radio, ship-to-shore communication and ship-to-plane, American jets were diverted to rescue South Korean foot soldiers. As the planes swept south Cag called ahead, "Roundelay, twelve jets reporting for orders. We're loaded."

From the bright morning sky came a whispery voice. "This is Roundelay. I'm flying an SNJ."

Each jet pilot was astonished that in today's swift war the out-of-date old SNJ would still be used. It had been ancient before they took basic training.

Then suddenly from behind a mountain the SNJ appeared—a rickety, two-bladed propeller job with a high greenhouse, a useless

spare seat and six smoke rockets slung precariously under its wings.

"What's an SNJ doing here?" Brubaker wondered. Then he learned.

"This is Roundelay. Get the big guns first."

"Can't see 'em," Cag said.

"Follow me."

And to the amazement of the jet pilots Roundelay trundled his slow plane down almost to the treetops and delivered a smoke rocket against the target.

"See it now?" he called.

"Will do!" Cag cried, and he led his twelve screaming jets into a howling dive, right on to the gun and it fired no more.

"Strictly wonderful," Roundelay called. "D'you see the other two?"

"Negative."

"Watch this smoke." And the insect-like SNJ hopped almost at ground level up a narrow valley to deliver another smoke rocket against another gun. Then, when it seemed the midget plane must follow the rocket against the rocks, the pilot twisted free, skipped over a ridge and ducked down upon a third gun.

When the swift jets had silenced these guns, Roundelay called cheerily, "You must come back often."

The jets had zoomed so high they could not keep track of the tiny plane, but then sunlight glinted suddenly on the ridiculous greenhouse and they heard Roundelay call, "I see Red troops beginning a new attack. Follow me." And once more he hurried off like a busy old woman going to market.

Brubaker watched Cag's four jets roar low into a column of Communists.

With appalling accuracy the Banshees spread their hundred-pound bombs, each wound with high-tension steel wire that shattered into small pieces with machine-gun fury. The Communist advance wavered.

"Next division," Roundelay called. "Keep hitting them while they're confused."

"Will do," Brubaker replied, but as he prepared for his dive, the SNJ wheeled suddenly and Roundelay called, "Do you see what I see?"

Below, in obedience to some order of incredible stupidity, more than one hundred Communists had moved out of a wood and on to a frozen road. As Brubaker's jets came screaming at them they fell to their knees in the middle of the road, clasped their arms about their heads and made no effort to escape inevitable death. The tactic so astonished Brubaker that he gasped, "They're sitting ducks!" And some boyhood training in the mountains behind Denver restrained him.

But when he had zoomed high into the heavens he heard the unemotional voice of Roundelay: "Clobber those guys. That's their standard trick. Throwing you off balance."

So the jets wheeled and came screaming back down the road. Not a Communist moved. They huddled and waited. "Here it comes," Brubaker whispered grimly, and his finger pressed the trigger. "You wanted trouble," he said weakly.

Roundelay now spotted another column of attacking Communists and called in Cag's division. Brubaker, with sickening detachment, watched the merciless jets and remembered Admiral Tarrant's words: "If we keep enough planes over them enough hours somebody's got to get hurt. And when they hurt bad enough, they'll quit."

"How's your fuel?" Roundelay asked.

"Can do one more pass," Cag replied, and the jet pilots, who approached the speed of sound, watched as the slow little insect SNJ hopped about in search of fat targets. Pulling out of his last bombing run, Brubaker sped past the propeller plane and for an instant of suspended time the two men looked casually at each other. Harry saw that the Air Force man was very thin and wore a moustache but he saw no more, for a five-inch Communist gun,

hidden until then, fired one lucky shot and blew the frail little SNJ to ribbons.

In fury Brubaker launched his jet at the gun and tried to root it from its cave. He carried his fire almost into the muzzle of the enemy gun. Then, although his fuel was getting tight, he turned and made another run, pushing his jet to a deadly speed. He saw the gun, saw the wounded crew and the shell casings. On he came, firing until his own guns were silent, and the Communists fell away. Then he zoomed aloft to overtake the homeward jets, which, except for his wingman, were far away.

"You ought to tell me when you're going to run wild," the wingman protested.

"I really clobbered that one," Brubaker said grimly. But as the two Banshees soared away from the ravaged battleground with its wrecked artillery and dead bodies huddled along frozen roads, the enemy gun that Brubaker thought he had destroyed resumed firing. Mute with outrage, Brubaker wanted to dive upon it once more but he heard his wingman say, "Their side has guts, too."

Finally, when the roar of the battle was past and the jets were far in the wintry sky Brubaker called, "How's your fuel?"

"Thousand five."

His own gauge read just under a thousand and he thought, "I hope Beer Barrel is bringing us in."

The two jets increased speed to rejoin the flight and the pilots began the difficult job of trying to spot the task force. Drifting clouds mottled the sea and made the ships almost invisible, but they had to be within a small area, for to the east hung the permanent snow line and to the north a new storm boxed in the fleet. But no one could see the ships.

It was ridiculous. Twelve highly trained pilots couldn't find a task force of nineteen ships, including carriers, cruisers and a battleship.

Then suddenly Cag called, "There's home!" and where nothing had been visible a moment before the jet pilots saw the

nineteen ships. And Brubaker, seeing them as big as barns on an open meadow, laughed.

But his relief didn't last, for when the jets descended he saw that the carrier deck was pitching badly. This meant many wave-offs because the landing officer would have to wait until the carrier stabilized itself between lurches; for a plane might approach in perfect altitude but find the deck in a momentary trough and have to go round again and that took fuel.

Then he had a happy thought: "They probably haven't turned into the wind. The deck'll be better when they do."

But as he watched, a flight of jets took off from the *Hornet* and that proved the carriers were already into the wind. Now he mumbled, "Beer Barrel, be out there today!" And as if in answer to this plea Cag announced, "Beer Barrel's bringing us in on a pitching deck. Anybody short of fuel?"

Brubaker reported, "1591 reporting over ship with eight hundred."

He listened to Cag forward this news to the *Savo* and then call, "We'll double up. No trouble getting aboard."

So instead of the normal interval which would enable one jet to land each twenty-six seconds, the twelve Banshees formed a tight little circle yielding fifteen-second intervals so that whenever the deck stabilized there would be some jet diving for it. This meant, however, that one out of every two planes would have to take automatic wave-offs. "Hope I'm one of the lucky ones," Brubaker thought.

He was. On his outward leg the *Savo* pitched so badly that no landing plane got aboard, but by the time Harry's downward leg started, the big ship was shuddering into stabilized position. "It'll hold that position for at least a minute," Brubaker assured himself. "Time to get three of us aboard." Nervously he ticked off the jets ahead of him in the circle. "Seven of them. Just right. First two will have to pass because the deck won't be steady enough, but three, five and seven'll make it. Boy, I'm seven!"

He saw Beer Barrel's paddles bringing number three in and the deck crew had the hook disengaged in two and a half seconds and the deck was steady and clear.

Then hell broke loose. The pilot in jet number five did what Beer Barrel had warned his men never to do. As his Banshee neared the cut-off point the deck lurched and the pilot tried to compensate. Instead of flying Beer Barrel he flew the deck and missed every wire. In panic he managed to pancake into the barriers but he ripped them both away and the crucial barricade as well.

Screaming over the wreckage, Brubaker saw instantly that it would take many minutes before the deck could be cleared and he cried feverishly to himself, "I don't want to go into the sea again."

His fear was unreasonable. He could see the helicopters waiting to rescue him. He saw the alert destroyers, always quick to lift a downed pilot from the waves. But he also saw the grey sea and he'd been down there once. "The second time you crack up, you sink and they never find you." Instinctively he felt to see if his three gloves were watertight at the wrist. That was where the sea had crept in and frozen him.

Suddenly he pulled his hand away in horror and whispered, "Beer Barrel, don't let me go into the drink."

He heard Cag's quiet voice saying, "All nylon torn away. At least ten minutes to repair it. Is that critical for 1591?"

Brubaker breathed deeply to drive down any quiver in his voice and reported evenly, "I'm down to six hundred."

Cag said to the ship, "1591 low on fuel. Must land on first pass after barrier is fixed."

The radio said, "*Hornet's* deck temporarily fouled. But would landing there in eight minutes be of help?"

Promptly Brubaker said, "I'd waste just as much gas getting in the circle. I'll stick here." What he did not say was that without Beer Barrel's help he might lose his nerve completely.

With mounting fear he noticed that the crashed plane still

fouled up the landing space and the broken barriers were not being promptly repaired. Then he saw something that froze him. The towering black crane called Tilly was being moved into position alongside the wrecked Banshee, right where the missing nylon barricade should have been. A quiet, reassuring voice spoke to him now, offering a choice. "1591," the impersonal voice said, "*Hornet's* deck still not ready. Impossible to erect barricade in time for you to land but we must protect planes parked forward. Have therefore moved Tilly into position to stop you positively in case you miss wire. Do you wish to attempt deck landing or do you wish to ditch? Advise."

He stared down at the monstrous crane looming up from the middle of the deck. "That'll stop me. Oh boy, will that stop me!" It was a brutal thing to do, to move Tilly out there, but he appreciated why it had been done. Behind the crane were parked forty million dollars' worth of aircraft and they must be protected. He felt no resentment at the manœuvre, but before replying he reasoned carefully, "The last guy missed the wires because the deck pitched. I can, too." He was about to elect ditching, but a compelling instinct told him that his only hope for safety lay with Beer Barrel.

"I'm coming in," he said.

He made his first turn and prayed, "Beer Barrel, bring me in. I don't care if the deck is going crazy, bring me in."

On the down-wind leg he dropped to correct altitude and avoided looking at the pitching deck. He kept his eyes on the screen that shielded Beer Barrel from the wind but for a moment he became sick, for the stern was bouncing about like a derelict row-boat.

"Bring me in, Beer Barrel."

As he whipped into the final turn he saw the terrible thing, the crane Tilly, filling the end of the landing space and he would have turned aside had he not also seen Beer Barrel. The big man stood on one foot, his paddles up . . . still good . . . still coming . . . oh, Beer Barrel, keep me coming . . .

Then mercifully the cut sign, the firm hook catching securely, the run of singing wire, the tremendous pull upon his shoulders, and his eyes looking up at the monstrous crane into which he did not crash.

From the flag bridge Admiral Tarrant followed the emergency landing and when he saw Brubaker lunge on to the deck safely he sent an aide to bring the pilot to him as soon as intelligence had checked battle reports. When Brubaker appeared, relaxed and smiling in freshly pressed khaki he said, "Somebody told me there were eight hundred ways to get back aboard a carrier. Any one of them's good, if you make it."

Tarrant laughed, jabbed a cup of coffee into the pilot's hands and asked casually, "What were you doing in the catapult room last night?"

Brubaker sat down carefully, sipped his coffee and said, "I lost my nerve last night."

"You looked pretty steady out there just now."

It was very important now that Brubaker say just the right thing, for he knew that something big was eating the Admiral. "Best sedative in the world is Beer Barrel and those paddles."

The bonds of sympathy which bound the Admiral to the younger man were at work. He didn't want Brubaker to participate in the attack on the bridges. In an off-hand manner he asked, "Son, do you want me to ground you . . . for tomorrow's flight against Toko-ri?"

Brubaker thought, "If he'd wanted me to stay down he wouldn't have asked. He'd have told me. This way he hopes I won't accept." But of his own will and regardless of the admiral he decided to say no. "If anybody goes, I go," he replied evenly.

Tarrant was aware that he had posed his question the wrong way. "I think you're jittery, son. I think you ought to stay down."

"The old man's wrestling with himself," Brubaker thought. "He wants to ground me but he's afraid it would look like

favouritism. He's trying to trick me into asking. That way everything would be O.K." But again he said, "I want to fly against the bridges."

"Harry, I've been watching you," Tarrant said. "There's nothing shameful in a man's reaching the end of his rope for the time being. You know I consider you our finest pilot . . . after the squadron leaders. But I can't let you fly tomorrow."

And Brubaker said quietly, "Sir, if you'd offered me this chance last night I'd have jumped to accept it. Or half an hour ago when I stared at that big black Tilly. But I think you know how it is, sir. Any time you get back safe, that day's trembling is over. Right now I haven't a nerve. Look." He held out his coffee saucer and it remained rigid.

"You're sure it's passed?"

"Positive. Remember when you told my wife about the voluntary men who save the world? I've seen two of these men. It shakes you to the roots to see such men in action."

"Who'd you see?" Tarrant asked.

"Yesterday I saw Cag take his photographic plane. . . . Admiral, he went in so low that he simply had to get knocked down. Then he went in again . . . lower."

"Cag?" Admiral Tarrant said, amazed.

"Yes, sir. And this morning. . . . Did anyone tell you about the Air Force spotter in the SNJ?"

"No."

Brubaker's voice almost broke. "He was killed by a gun I might have knocked out if I'd really been on the ball." There was a long silence in which Tarrant poured more coffee. Finally Brubaker said, "Sometimes you look honour right in the face—in the face of another man. It's terrifying." His voice trailed away and he added in a whisper, "So I have no choice. I have to go out tomorrow. If he could fly an SNJ, I can fly a jet." He thrust his saucer out again. It remained immovable, like the end of a solid stone arm. "No nerves now," he said.

IT WAS 1145 next morning when Cag, his jets poised aloft for their first run against the bridges, cried, "Attack, attack, attack!"

With deadly precision, and ignoring the mortal curtain of Communist fire, four Banshees assigned to flak-suppression flung themselves upon the heaviest guns at more than five hundred miles an hour. Rendezvousing to the north, they swept back in ghostly blue streaks and raked the principal emplacements a second time, but as they reached the middle of this passage Communist fire struck number three plane and it smashed into a hill and exploded in an instantaneous orange flash.

Before the eight pilots aloft could realize what had happened Cag called quietly, "Prepare to attack," and the four jets in his division peeled off for swift assault upon the bridges. They descended at an angle steeper than fifty degrees and for the entire final run of two miles no pilot swerved or dodged until his first huge bomb sped free.

From aloft Brubaker saw that Cag had got two of the bridges. Now he must finish the job. He brought his division down in a screaming dive, aware that when he straightened out, the pull of gravity upon him would suck the blood away from his head. But the fascination of those looming bridges of Toko-ri lured him on. Lower and lower he came. When he finally pickled his bomb and pulled away he absorbed so many G's that a heaviness came upon his legs and his face was drawn drowsily down upon his chin. He knew nothing of this, however, for he experienced only surging elation. He had bombed the bridges.

Then he heard the dismal voice: "No damage to main bridge."

And you had to believe that voice, for it was that of the last man through. Tomorrow homeside newspapers might exaggerate the damage. You could kid the intelligence officer. And you could lie like a schoolboy to pilots from another squadron, but last man through told the truth. No damage.

"I'm sure Brubaker got a span," Cag argued.

"Negative," the voice replied flatly.



"How about the truck bridges?"

"Clobbered, clobbered, clobbered."

Cag called, "Stand by for run number two," and eleven jets orbited for position. The three flak-suppression Banshees stampeded for the gun-rimmed valley and Cag brought his men in over the same check points as before, thus cheating some of the Communist gunners, who had been gambling that he would use the other entrance to their valley. Through grey bomb smoke and bursts of flak, through spattering lead and their own fears, the first four pilots bore in upon the bridges. Roaring straight down the railway track like demon trains they pickled their heavy freight upon the bridge and pulled away with sickening G's upon them, their mouths gaping wide, their eyes dulled.

As Brubaker led his men upon the bridges he saw a magnificent sight.

Three spans were down and a fourth was crumbling. The



two truck bridges were demolished and the alternate railway span was in the mud. In triumph he called, "This is Brubaker. All bridges down. Divert to the dump." He swung his Banshee away from the bridges, over a slight rise of ground, and down upon the sprawling military dumps. Strafing, bombing, twisting, igniting, he screamed on, his three team-mates following. Somebody's bomb struck ammunition. Consecutive explosions, each keeping the next alive, raced through the stores.

This time the last man through said, "We hit something big."

Cag, aloft, called, "All planes, all planes. Work over the dump."

Swooping low, they spun their fragmentation bombs earthwards and retired into the lonely distance. Returning, they dodged hills and spread deathly fire. Over snowy ridges they formed for new runs and wherever they moved there was silent beauty and the glint of sunlight on the bronzed helmet of some man riding beneath the plexiglass canopy.

His ammunition nearly spent, Brubaker nosed down for a final run upon the spattered dumps, but Cag called, "Stay clear of the ammo dumps. We have them popping." So he twisted his jet to the south, away from the river, but before he could launch his dive, two other jets streaked across his target and jettisoned their bombs so that again he had to pull away. He was tempted to drop his last bomb where he thought he saw a gun emplacement but he discarded this idea as unworthy for it occurred to him quite clearly that even one bomb more dropped on the dump might mean significant interdiction of supplies to the front: fewer bullets for Communist gunners, fewer blankets for their trenches, less food. He recalled Admiral Tarrant's words: "If we keep the pressure high enough something's got to explode over there."

So he turned away from his easy target and bore down upon the dump. He activated his nose guns and watched their heavy bullets rip into valued cargo and set it afire. Then he resolutely pickled his last bomb. But as he pulled out of his dive, with heavy G's upon his face, he heard a pinking-thud.

"I've been hit!" he cried and as the jet sped upwards chaos took over. He lost control of his mind and of the Banshee and in panic thought only of Wonsan harbour. He felt the irresistible lure of the sea where friendly craft might rescue him and he wrenched his nose violently towards the east and fled homewards like a sea-stricken thing.

As soon as he had made this desperate turn, however, he became aware that panic was flying the plane, not he, and he called quietly, "Joe, Joe. Just took a hit. So far I'm all right."

From the dark sky aloft came the reassuring whisper, "Harry, this is Joe. I have you in sight."

"Joe, drop down and look me over."

Now an ugly vibration identified itself as coming from the port engine but for one fragile second of time it seemed as if the frightening sound might abate. Then, with shattering echoes, the entire engine seemed to fall apart and Brubaker whispered to him-

self, "I'm not going to get this crate out of Korea."

A Communist bullet no bigger than a man's thumb, fired at random by some ground defender of the dump, had blundered haphazardly into the turbine blades, which were then whirring at nearly thirteen thousand revolutions a minute. So delicately was the jet engine balanced that the loss of only two blade tips had thrown the entire mechanism out of balance, and the grinding noise Brubaker heard was the turbine throwing off dozens of knifelike blades into the fuselage or out through the dark sky.

He had, of course, immediately cut fuel to the damaged engine and increased revolutions on the other and as soon as the clatter of the damaged turbines subsided he cut off its air supply and eliminated the destructive vibrations altogether. Then, in fresh silence, he checked the twenty principal indicators on his panel and found things to be in pretty good shape. "I might even make it back to the ship," he said hopefully. "Anyway, I'll be able to reach the sea."

He laughed at himself and said, "Look at me! Yesterday I pushed the panic button because I might have to go into the sea. Today I reached for it because I might miss the water."

As he reasoned with himself Joe came lazily out from beneath his wing and waved.

"Everything all right now?" Joe asked.

"All under control," he answered.

"Fuel O.K.?"

"Fine. More than two thousand pounds."

"Keep checking it," Joe said quietly. "You may be losing a little."

Then the sick panic returned. Impeded by heavy gear he tried to look aft but couldn't. Fleeting, from the corner of his eye, he saw a thin wisp of white vapour trailing in the black sky. He knocked his goggles away and his peripheral vision spied the dusty vapour, no thicker than a pencil.

"Joe," he called quietly. "That looks like a fuel leak."

"You'll make the sea all right," Joe said, and both men surrendered any idea of reaching the ship.

"I'll make the sea," Harry said.

"I'll trail you," Joe called.

In a few minutes he said, "You're losing fuel pretty fast, Harry."

There was no longer any use to kid himself. "Yeah. Now the instruments show it."

Joe drew his slim blue jet quite close to Harry's and the two men looked at one another as clearly as if they had been across a table in some bar. "I still think you'll make the sea," Joe said.

But Harry knew that merely reaching the sea wasn't enough. "How far out must we go in Wonsan harbour to miss the Communist mines?" he asked.

"You ought to go two miles. But you'll make it, Harry."

The turbine blade that had sliced into the fuel line now broke loose and allowed a heavy spurt of gasoline to erupt so that Joe could clearly see it. "You're losing gas pretty fast now," he said.

There was a sad drop on the fuel gauge and Brubaker said, "Guess that does it."

To prevent explosion, he immediately killed his good engine and felt the Banshee stutter in mid-air, as if caught by some enormous hand. Then, at two hundred and fifty miles an hour, he started the long and agonizing glide which carried him ever nearer to the sea and always lower towards the mountains.

Quickly Joe cut his own speed and said, "We better call the word."

With crisp voice Brubaker announced the strange word which by general consent across the world has come to mean disaster. In Malaya, in China, over Europe or in the jungle airports of the Amazon this word betokens final catastrophe: "Mayday, Mayday."

It was heard by Communist monitors and by the officers in Task Force 77. Aloft, Cag heard it and turned his jets back to keep watch upon their stricken member. And aboard the scow on the

coast the newly reported helicopter team of Mike Forney and Nestor Gamidge heard it.

Silently, through the upper reaches of the sky, Harry and Joe flew side by side. They had never been particularly friendly, for their interests and ages varied, nor had they talked much. But now in the dark violet sky with sunlight gleaming beneath them on the hills of Korea they carried on their urgent conversation, their faces bright in plexiglass and their voices speaking clear through the vast emptiness of the space.

"We'll make the sea," Joe said reassuringly.

"I'm sure going to try."

"When we reach the sea will you parachute or ditch?" Joe asked.

"I ditched once, I'll do it again."

"I never asked you, how does the Banshee take the water?"

"Fine, if you keep the tail down."

"Remember to jettison your canopy, Harry."

"I don't aim to be penned in."

"Six more minutes will put us there."

They were low now and could spot Communist villages and see bursts of Communist guns. So they fought to reach the sea.

But they did not make it. For looming ahead of them rose the hills behind Wonsan harbour. Between the jets and the sea stood these ugly hills and there was no way to pass them. Instinctively Brubaker shoved the throttle forward to zoom higher—only a couple of hundred feet, even fifty might do—but relentlessly the stricken Banshee settled lower.

From the adjoining plane Joe pointed to the obstructing hills and Brubaker said, "I see them. I won't make it."

Joe asked, "Now, Harry, are you going to jump or crash land?"

"Crash," Harry said promptly.

Back in the States he had decided to stick with his plane no matter what happened. Besides, Communists shot at parachutes, whereas the speed of a crash often took them by surprise and permitted rescue operations.

"Keep your wheels up," Joe said. "Be sure to hit every item on the check-off list."

"Will do."

"Harry, make sure those shoulder straps are really tight."

"Already they're choking me."

"Unhook your oxygen mask and radio before you hit."

"Will do."

"Knife? Gun?"

Brubaker nodded. Although he was soon going to hit some piece of Korean ground at a speed of one hundred and thirty miles, his plane bursting out of control at impact, in this quiet preparatory moment he could smile out of his canopy and converse with Joe as if they were long-time friends reviewing a basketball game.

"Pretty soon now," he said.

"I'll move ahead and try to find a good field," Joe said. Before he pulled away he pointed aloft and said, "Cag's upstairs."

Soon he called, "This field looks fair."

"Isn't that a ditch running down the middle?"

"Only shadows."

"You think I can stop short of the trees?"

"Easy, Harry. Easy. And listen, Harry. When you do land, no matter what happens, get out fast."

"You bet. I don't like exploding gas."

Desperately Brubaker wanted to make one run along the field to check things for himself, but the remorseless glide kept dragging him down.

He heard Joe's patient voice calling, "Harry, you better jettison that canopy right now."

"I forgot."

Like a schoolteacher with a child Joe said, "That was first on the check-off list. Field look O.K.?"

"You pick 'em real good, son."

Those were the last words Harry said to his wingman for the ground was rushing up too fast and there was much work to do.

Dropping his right wing to make the turn on to the field, he selected what looked like the clearest strip and lowered his flaps. Then, kicking off a little altitude by means of a side-slip, he headed for the earth. Tensed almost to the shattering point, he held the great Banshee steady, tail down, heard a ripping sound, saw his right wing drop suddenly and tear away, watched a line of trees rush up at him. The impact almost tore the harness through his left shoulder socket, but without this bracing he would surely have been killed. For an instant he thought the pain might make him faint, but the rich sweet smell of gasoline reached him and with swift planned motions he ripped himself loose from the smoking plane.

He was in a rice field. Beyond lay other rice fields and many curious U-shaped houses, their roofs covered with snow. To the north were mountains, to the south a row of trees, while from the east came a hint of salt air telling him that the sea was not far distant. He started running clumsily from the plane and before he had run far it burst into flames and exploded with numerous small blasts which sent billows of smoke into the air, informing Communists in the village nearby that another American plane had crashed.

"They'll be after me soon," he thought and ran faster.

Within a few steps he was soaked with sweat inside his poopy suit and his breath hurt as it fought its way into his lungs. But still he ran, his big boots sticking in snowy mud, his intolerable gear holding him back.

Finally he had to rest and sat upon a mound of earth forming the bank of a wide ditch that ran along the western edge of the field. One foot went into the centre of the ditch and he drew back in disgust for the smell he stirred up told him this was used for storing sewage until it was placed upon the rice fields. The stench was great and he was about to leave when across the field he saw two Communist soldiers approach the burning jet with rifles. He hid behind the mound of earth and reached for the revolver

which he had once fired nine times in practice. Inspecting its unfamiliar construction, he remembered that it contained six bullets, to which he could add the twelve sewed on to his holster straps. "None to waste," he thought.

Then one of the soldiers saw his trail in the snow. The two men stopped, pointed almost directly to where he hid and started for him, their rifles ready.

At first he thought he would try to run down the ditch and hide in the line of trees but he realized the soldiers would intercept him before he could accomplish that. So he decided to stick it out where he was, and he lifted his revolver, for American pilots knew that if they were captured in this part of Korea they were usually shot.

"I'll wait till they reach that spot," he thought, looking at a muddy place. "Then I'll let 'em have it." But suddenly Joe's Banshee whirled out of the noonday sun and blasted the Communists. Then, with a wailing cry, it screamed to rendezvous with Cag for the flight back to the *Savo*.

From his filthy ditch, Harry watched the mysterious and lovely jets stream out to sea. They were supreme in the sky, these rare, beautiful things, slim-lined, noses gently dipping, silver canopies shining in the sun. Once he had been part of those jets and now, huddling to earth, he pictured them entering the landing circle and he thought, "It would be fun, heading in towards Beer Barrel right now."

He was determined to find a better refuge before new Communists arrived, for the smell in the ditch was too strong to tolerate. But when he started to run towards the trees he saw four people standing there. Quickly he brandished his revolver at them, but they must have known he could not shoot them from so far for they stood impassively watching.

They were the family from the nearest farm, a mother, father and two children, dressed in discarded uniforms and carrying rakes. He stopped to see if they intended to attack him, but they remained still and he saw them not as Koreans but as the Japanese

family that had intruded on his sulphur bath that morning in the Fuji-san. Suddenly, an unbearable longing for his own wife and children possessed him, but it was as suddenly driven from him by the arrival of more soldiers. From the very trees towards which he was heading appeared eleven guards, shouting in Korean, so he hastily dived back to his stinking ditch where they could not hit him. They launched a methodical encircling attack but before they could bring him under fire four F4U's appeared overhead, called in by Cag to protect the downed pilot until rescue operations could begin.

Using Brubaker as their focal point, the slow propeller planes established a four-leaf clover in which each flew a big figure eight with such perfect timing as to have one plane coming in over Brubaker at all times, with alternate planes commanding different sectors of land so that no enemy dare approach.

The very first run enabled the F4U men to spot the eleven Communists, and with sharp fire they tied the soldiers down. In the respite Brubaker thought, "With such cover a helicopter might make it," and he began to hope. Then, thinking to find a better spot from which to dash to the 'copter if it should arrive, he started to move out, but the Korean family saw him and thinking he was moving towards them, they withdrew. The F4U man responsible for this sector spied the Koreans, saw their tattered uniforms and roared upon them, his guns ablaze.

"No!" Brubaker screamed. "No! No!" He waved his arms and jumped wildly to divert the F4U.

But the pilot could not see him. Focusing his sights grimly at what he knew to be the enemy, he brought his fiery guns to bear on the Korean family. For one ghastly moment he thought two of the soldiers might have been children, but by then he was far away, roaring back into the four-leafed clover.

Sick, Harry Brubaker stood in the ditch and thought of his own daughters, and his heavy body was cold with sweat.

He was standing thus when the helicopter appeared. ~~It was~~



lumbered in from the scow, dodging ground fire and flying so low that a revolver bullet could have destroyed it. Smack in the middle of the rice field it landed and Mike Forney got out. He wore his green top hat, a new Baron von Richthofen scarf of Japanese silk and a carbine. Behind him stumbled sad-faced Nestor Gamidge, also with a carbine. Leaving Gamidge at the 'copter, Forney ran across the rice field shouting, "Relax, Harry! Everything's under control."

Brubaker shouted, "Better dodge and duck."

"Why, is there a war goin' on?"

"Look!" He pointed towards the trees and as he did so a volley

of machine-gun fire spattered the helicopter. Gamidge fell to the ground but rolled over several times and indicated that he was all right. The helicopter burst into flames.

Forney jumped into the ditch and turned back to watch the fire. This was it. No other 'copter would come on to this field. With flames of noon in their eyes the two men in the ditch looked at each other, unable to speak. Then slowly Mike pulled his right foot up.

"Harry," he asked. "Is this what I think it is?"

"Yep."

Scornfully he said, "You sure picked a wonderful place to fight a war." Then he shrugged his shoulders and growled. "We might as well get Nestor in here. Three of us can stand those apes off for days."

He hefted his carbine nonchalantly and started across the rice field to convoy Gamidge but when the sallow-faced Kentuckian stood up Communist bullets chopped him in the chest and he fell. Still wearing his green hat, Mike blasted the line of trees in pathetic fury, for he must have known his carbine could not carry so far. Then he ran forward to where Nestor lay, but soon he crawled back to the stinking ditch and tried not to look at Harry.

"They were goin' to give Nestor a medal," he said bitterly.

In silence the two men tried to pile up stones as protection for their faces.

"Why'd you bring the 'copter in here, Mike?" Brubaker asked.

"I take care of my men, sir."

"How is it aboard the scow?" Brubaker phrased the question so as to imply that Forney would be returning there when this day was over.

"It's fair, but carrier duty spoils you."

"I liked the *Savo*," Brubaker said, and when referring to himself he used the completed tense, surrendering hope.

The two men looked up at the F4U's and Forney asked, "How much longer will they be able to stay?"

"Not long," Brubaker replied.

"Well, we got nothin' to worry about. The jets'll be back."

The Communists were starting to move in now. From time to time accurate rifle fire pinked the top of the mound and Brubaker thought ruefully of people back in Denver who visualized Communists as peasants with pitchforks who overran positions in mass attacks.

"Those guys know what they're doing," he said.

"But they don't know what they're gonna meet!" Mike laughed. Suddenly he looked at Harry and said, "Why didn't you tell me you didn't have a carbine!" Before Brubaker could stop him, he dashed across the rice field, grabbed Nestor Gamidge's carbine and stripped the dead man of his ammunition. Two F4U's, seeing what Mike was doing, roared low and held the Communists off while the Irishman dodged and ducked his way back to the ditch.

"Now they'll know something hit 'em!" he cried as he jammed the weapon into Harry's hands.

Realization that Mike intended to battle it out here made Harry shiver and he asked, "You think there's any chance they'd allow us to surrender?"

"Those apes?" Mike asked. A bullet zinged into the mud behind them and Mike grabbed Brubaker's arm. "You understand, sir, I came out here to save you. I don't want to die. There was a fightin' chance or I wouldn't have come. But now we're here, let's go down really swingin'."

He watched one of the Communists creep forward for a better shot. "Don't fire too soon at those apes," he whispered. He kept his hand on Harry's arm for at least two minutes. Then, just as the enemy soldier got into position Mike blasted him right in the face. When Mike looked back he saw that Brubaker was busy with his hip knife, slashing away at his poopy suit.

"What are you doin'?" the Irishman exploded.

"Letting some air in."

"Have you gone nuts, sir?"

"Ever since I climbed into my first poopy suit I've been weighed down. I've been sweating and unable to breathe. Like a zombie. Today I want to feel like a human being." He stripped away large chunks of his burdensome gear and stood reasonably free. "I feel better already," he said.

Mike was sure the lieutenant had gone off his rocker but there wasn't anything he could do about it so he laughed and said, "I'm just the same way. I couldn't fight these apes without my green hat."

"Why do you wear it?" Harry asked.

"I want people to know I'm around." He pointed to the trees. "In about three minutes now."

The Communists were moving slowly and with deliberate plan. Four of them came in from the south, three from the mountain quarter. "I'm gonna keep my eye on those four out there," Mike said.

Some minutes passed and there was a flurry of fire from the three soldiers in the mountain quarter but Forney yelled, "Forget them!" and he was right, for the other four lunged forward and tried to overrun the ditch.

Calmly Mike and Harry waited until the Communists were close upon them. Then they started to fire rapidly. The Communists fired back but Mike yelled, "They're crumblin'," and he chopped them down.

"That'll take care of the boys," he shouted. "Now bring on the men." But as he turned to congratulate Brubaker, an unseen Communist who had sneaked in from the sea quarter hurled two grenades into the ditch. One of them Mike managed to throw back but as he lifted the second it exploded and tore him apart. He stumbled forward towards the unseen enemy and pitched into the snow.

Now the sky was empty and the helicopter stood burned out in the rice field and in the ditch there was no one beside him. Harry Brubaker, a twenty-nine-year-old lawyer from Denver, Colorado,

was alone in a spot he had never intended to defend in a war he had not understood. In his home town at that moment the University of Colorado was playing Denver in their traditional basketball game. The stands were crowded with more than eight thousand people and not one of them gave a damn about Korea.

But Harry Brubaker was in Korea, armed with two carbines. He was no longer afraid nor was he resentful. This was the war he had been handed by his nation and in the noonday sun he had only one thought: he was desperately in love with his wife and kids and he wanted to see them one more time.

The memory of his family was too much to bear and for an instant he pressed his right hand across his eyes and thought, "The girls will be in the garden now. . . ."

He did not complete the picture for the hidden Communist who had tossed the grenades had remained close and now with one carefully planned shot sped a bullet directly through the hand that covered the American's face. In that millionth of a second, while ten slim Banshees roared in from the sea to resume command of the sky, Harry Brubaker understood in some fragmentary way the purpose of his being in Korea. But the brief knowledge served no purpose, for the next instant he plunged face down into the ditch.

THROUGH the long afternoon that followed, Admiral Tarrant haunted his telephone, waiting for news. Finally, from the clandestine broadcaster near Wonsan came the facts: "Jet plane crash. Helicopter crash. Three Americans killed by Communist troops." Shaken, the lean, hard-bitten admiral left flag plot and walked gravely to his tiny room, for he knew that he must report these facts to Nancy Brubaker, in Yokosuka. But as he stared at the radio message he asked, "How do you explain to a wife that her husband has died for his nation? How do you tell that to a woman with two children?" Burning with fury he summoned Cag to him, lashing at the bullet-headed commander as soon as he appeared:

"Why was Brubaker abandoned?"

Cag's eyes were red and tired from too much flying but he controlled his nerves and said, "We kept an air cap over him."

"If one helicopter crashed, why didn't you send another?"

"Sir, it's not my job to dispatch 'copters. You ask for volunteers. And there are never enough Mike Forneys."

"How was Brubaker hit in the first place?"

"He was working over the dumps."

The admiral pounced: "What was he doing at the dumps?"

Patently Cag explained. "Before we took off we agreed. If we get the bridges, we expend our ammo on the dumps."

Icily, the old man asked, "Was that wise?"

Cag had taken enough. He'd stood this angry old tyrant long enough and there was no promotion in the Navy that would make him take any more. "Admiral," he said grimly, "this was a good mission. We did everything just right. I put Brubaker in charge of the third division because I could trust him to fly low and bore in with his bombs. He did just that."

Trembling with anger he rushed on, "Admiral, everybody in the air group knows that you selected Brubaker as your special charge. You do that on every command and we know why you do it. Some kid your own boy's age. So today I led your boy to death. But it was a good mission. We did everything just right. And it was your boy who helped destroy the bridges. Admiral, if my eyes are red it's for that kid. Because he was mine, too. And I lost him."

The old man stood there, staring stonily at the shaking commander while Cag shot the works. "I don't care any longer what kind of fitness report you turn in on me because this was a good mission. It was a good mission." Without saluting he stormed from flag country, his fiery steps echoing as he stamped away.

For many hours the admiral remained alone. Then towards morning he heard the anti-submarine patrol go out and as the engines roared he asked, "Why is America lucky enough to have such men? They leave this tiny ship and fly against the enemy. Then they must seek the ship, lost somewhere on the sea. And

when they find it, they have to land upon its pitching deck. Where did we get such men?"

He went out to watch the launching of the dawn strike. As streaks of light appeared, pilots came on deck. Bundled like animals awakened from hibernation, they waddled purposefully to their jets. The last to climb aboard was Cag, stocky and round like a snowball. He checked each jet, then studied his own. Finally, as if there were nothing more he could do, he scrambled into his plane. Majestically, the task force turned into the wind, the bull horn jangled and a voice in the gloom cried, "Launch jets."

Admiral Tarrant watched them go, two by two from the lashing catapult, planes of immortal beauty whipping into the air with flame and fury upon them. They did not waste fuel orbiting but each screamed to the west, seeking new bridges in Korea.





James A. Michener

JAMES A. MICHENER, whose first book, *Tales of the South Pacific*, received the Pulitzer Prize and was transformed into the famous musical play, *South Pacific*, has been a wanderer since his fourteenth year.

Leaving his Bucks County, Pennsylvania, home in 1921, he hitch-hiked his way across the country and in succeeding years had jobs as a sports columnist, as a spotter in an amusement park, and as a "frightfully bad actor on the Chautauqua circuit." Before he was twenty he had seen all but three of the states and might have continued to drift except for a Quaker inheritance of quiet determination to do some good in the world. In 1929 he passed out with honours from an American University and then studied at St. Andrew's University in Scotland.

When the war came, he left a job as editor in a New York publishing house and enlisted in the U.S. Navy, in which he became an expert on aircraft maintenance and Senior Historical Officer for the South Pacific area. The intimate knowledge and understanding he gained at this time have coloured most of his succeeding work.

OLD
HERBACEOUS

OLD HERBACEOUS

A condensation of the book by

REGINALD ARKELL.



"Old Herbaceous" is published by Michael Joseph, London

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IT WAS one of those mild autumn mornings when early mist had turned to soft rain and water dripped from everything. No real touch of winter yet; just a soft pause between the seasons, giving you the best of both. This was the time of year and the time of day that the old man loved best. He couldn't get around so much now, but they had made up his bed by the cottage window and he could see into the Manor gardens. Not what they were—not by a long chalk. . . . People said that big gardens were finished, but he didn't believe that. The world started with a garden and a thing that had been going all that time wouldn't end so easily.

These young fellows didn't seem to care any more. That was the trouble nowadays. . . . You had to be proud of a garden to do any good with it. Gardening was a whole-time job. . . . When he was head gardener at the Manor, he never felt that he was just a paid man working for a wage. He felt that the place was his—and so it was, in a manner of speaking. . . . Those were the days! . . . A young fellow could push his way through and rise to anything—if he wasn't afraid of work and took an interest in his job.

Well, he'd stuck to it, and he'd come out at the top. Started as a nobody and ended as a somebody. . . . Respected, he was. . . . They might laugh at him behind his back, some of the young ones. Called him "Old Herbaceous" when they thought he wasn't listening. Well, let them have their little joke. After all, he *was* a bit of a perennial. . . . The old man closed his eyes and let his thoughts wander through the scented past. A long journey, uphill most of the way, but it had led somewhere, and no mistake. . . .

IT WAS a bit of a pill, of course, coming into the world as nobody's child—especially when you'd got along in the world and

become someone. Mrs. Pinnegar, the cowman's wife, must have received quite a shock that May morning some eighty-odd years ago when she came out of her cottage and found a baby, as newly-born as made no difference, on her doorstep. Still and all Mrs. Pinnegar wasn't one to get excited. A kindly soul, and a practical woman, she picked up the parcel the fairies had brought her, christened it Herbert—after an uncle who was killed in the Crimea—and set about her Monday's wash. With six children of her own, one more didn't matter.

Naturally, there was a bit of chatter at the time. But seasons came and went and young Herbert was just another among the small country boys in torn corduroys and hob-nailed boots who perched on the hump-backed bridge overlooking the old Thames and Severn canal—its utility even then eclipsed by the railways—and threw stones into the stagnant water below while they baited the ageing lock-keeper. But young Herbert did not enter largely into the spirit of the thing. One of his scraggy little legs was a shade shorter than the other, the result of rough horse-play in which he had had the worst of the bargain. His "back answers" to the contraptious old lock-keeper lacked the snap of his fellows; possibly because he couldn't run as fast as they could.

At this point in his ruminations, Old Herbaceous stirred uneasily among his cushions. Always the picture of himself, so different from the other boys, came as a disturbing element. Too, being picked up on a doorstep. . . . Well, there was nobody left now to throw that in his teeth. . . . Very soon he'd go, too, and then there'd be nothing left of him but the shrubs and flowers and trees he'd planted and loved.

Funny, that! You planted a tree; you watched it grow; and, when you were old, you sat in the shade of it. Then you died and they forgot all about you—just as though you had never been. But the tree went on growing. Everybody ought to plant a tree, sometime or another—if only to keep himself humble in the sight of the Lord.

Having thus set his mind at rest, the old man let his thoughts wander back to happier days. He remembered, as if it was yesterday, the first day he went to the village school. It was presided over by a large, comfortable maiden lady named Mary Brain. Having no children of her own, she dealt faithfully with those in her charge; and every now and again one would come in for special mothering. So it was that young Herbert, creeping like a frightened kitten into a strange, cold world, discovered a wonderful new heaven where he really meant something to somebody at last.

Almost any summer evening, these two could be seen wandering in the fields, or walking along the towpath of the old canal, whose overgrown banks afforded a wonderful richness in plant life. Yellow flags, water bubbles, wild heliotrope and a dozen other exuberant growths. As the two rambled happily together, the teacher packed the pupil's receptive mind with a store of facts. Mary Brain was the greatest authority on wild flowers in the county; so that of young Herbert it began to be said that "what he didn't know about wild flowers wasn't worth knowing."

Then one day Herbert announced that he wanted to enter for the wild flower competition at the Annual Flower Show. Mary Brain knew how village tongues wagged, especially when you won a prize at the show. And if by some chance young Herbert *should* catch the judges' eye, everyone would say she had helped him with his exhibit. All of which she explained to the budding champion, then gave him her blessing and sent him about his business with instructions not to come back until the show was over.

ONCE AGAIN young Herbert felt like the kitten that gets the sharp end of its mother's claw and is told to catch mice for itself. He knew he should go into the fields, as well as to the canal banks, for his selections. But young Herbert was terrified of farmers. Pick one moon daisy in the corner of a mowing field and a fearful ogre appeared suddenly from nowhere and bellowed at you! Besides, most of the flowers he really liked grew by the canal and, as they

grew together, so they would look well together after he had picked and arranged them. Like people who had always known and liked one another. Young Herbert didn't work it out quite that way, but anything was better than risking a farmer's wrath by venturing into the fields.

So, to the canal he went, with an old bucket and one of Mrs. Pinnegar's rusty table knives. Right at the start he learned the lesson that comes to every gardener: the gardener is a frustrated being for whom flowers never bloom at the right moment. The flowers you grow today are never so lovely as the flowers you grew yesterday and will grow again tomorrow. It is all very sad, and how gardeners manage to keep going in the face of such adversities is one of those mysteries.

Young Herbert had made a list of the flowers he would include in his prize posy, but when it came to the point, he had to cross so many names off his list that there seemed to be nothing left. Still, there were the forget-me-nots and the creeping jenny and the meadow-sweet. . . . Young Herbert filled his bucket with a bit of everything and hoped for the best.

The next morning at the big tent young Herbert was dismayed to find that his bunch of wild flowers, carefully arranged in a large pie-dish, was about half the size of any other exhibit. Where he had collected less than a dozen varieties, his competitors had twenty! Young Herbert felt an awful sinking in his stomach.

Then the judges came in—those Olympians from neighbouring villages. Serious-looking men, they brought with them an air of solemnity suitable to such a solemn occasion. They ordered all competitors out of the tent, but young Herbert hung around as long as he dared, watching. . . . And, as he watched, he made his great resolve: one day, he, too, would be a judge at a flower show!

He was so busy building his castles in the air that he quite forgot the disaster of the wild flower competition. It was a minute or two, also, before he noticed that the judges were accompanied by the most lovely, laughing lady he had ever seen. Almost a girl she was

—not a day older than eighteen. Young Herbert stood in the centre of the tent with his mouth wide open and promptly fell in love, forever and ever, amen.

Failing to take precautions, he was discovered and bundled out of the tent with a flea in his ear. Then, wandering out into the bright sunshine, he fell over a guy-rope and nearly broke his neck. But it was worth it. . . .

Later, when everybody gathered round the pavilion where the prizes were to be awarded, young Herbert wasn't particularly interested. He wasn't, that is, until he saw who was distributing the prizes. Then he squeezed through to the front row to have another good look at his lovely lady. One by one the lucky winners were duly clapped by the less fortunate. And then: "Wild flower Competition for school children under the age of twelve: First Prize, Herbert Pinnegar. . . ."

But the small boy in the front row was far away in a golden country where knights rode on white horses. . . . Someone gave him a push in the back. "Get on wi' it; that be you!" and young Herbert was literally shoved up the steps. . . .

"Well, little boy," said the lady, "do you know why I've given you the first prize?"

"No, miss," said young Herbert. And if ever he spoke the truth, it was then.

"Because you picked water flowers instead of grabbing the first things that came and mixing them up anyhow. You must help me with my garden one of these days. . . ."

He should, of course, have touched his cap, run down the steps and showed his bright new half-crown to his envious contemporaries. But young Herbert just stood there. "Didn't even hold out his hand for the money," as one incredulous matron remarked to a neighbour.

But the winner of the second prize was waiting, so he was hustled down the steps and the whole unfortunate episode was attributed to an attack of nerves.

But nerves had nothing to do with it. Conscience had reared its frightening head. Young Herbert wanted to explain to the lady how it wasn't cleverness but fear of the farmers that had won him the prize. In his heart he knew that he had deceived her and he would never forgive himself for that. . . .

No, not if he lived to be a hundred, he wouldn't.

And, to do him justice, he never did.



AGAIN AND again young Herbert vowed that he would never, never go on to a farm. But it was one thing to have big ideas and quite another to put them into practice. Christmas was coming, and he was due to leave school permanently at the end of the term. Everybody supposed he would go on the land, like all the other village boys. What else was there to do, anyway, and what else was he good for? As he lay in bed at night, all these queries took goblin shape and gibbered at him from the bed-rail.

At the end of the term, it was customary for boys who were leaving school to go to the Vicarage for a nice friendly little chat. You were shown into the study, where the Vicar sat behind his big desk, and you answered one or two questions on the Travels of St. Paul or the Sermon on the Mount—just to make sure that you were fitted for the great business of life. Then the Vicar asked what you were going to do and you mumbled that you were going into the stables up at the farm. After which, the Vicar patted you on the shoulder, gave you a new sixpence and you went out into the world.

When young Herbert's turn came to take the plunge, something went wrong with the usual routine. In the first place, the Vicar was not alone. There, sitting in an armchair, was the lady of the flower show. By this time, everybody knew that she was going to

marry young Captain Charteris, who had bought the Manor, and that the wedding was to take place almost any day now. Pre-occupied with such important nuptial arrangements, the Vicar cut out his usual preamble and got down to business.

"Well, Pinnegar," he said, "what are you going to do?"

Young Herbert shifted from one foot to another. "I dunno, sir," he replied.

This breaking with tradition was rather disturbing. "But surely," prompted the Vicar, "you *want* to go on the land, don't you?"

"No, sir," said young Herbert.

This simple negative had various repercussions. Young Herbert could scarcely believe his ears when he heard himself talking such treason. The Vicar literally gaped with astonishment. And the lady sat there, laughing at the pair of them.

She was the first to speak. "But, Vicar," she said, "why should he have to go on the land if he doesn't want to?"

Recovering his composure, the Vicar gave the official ruling: "All the village boys go on the land. The land needs them. They have been educated with that end in view. I will speak to——"

The young lady suddenly interrupted. "Aren't you the boy who won the prize for wild flowers at the show?"

"Yes, miss," replied young Herbert.

"Of course you are. The only one who showed any imagination. You're fond of flowers, aren't you?"

"Yes, miss," gulped young Herbert.

"How would you like to come to the Manor and help me with my new garden?"

The gates of Paradise suddenly opened, then, as suddenly, closed again: "Really, Charlotte," said the Vicar, "I wish you wouldn't interfere. What do you know of our rural problems? You've only been here two minutes."

"If it comes to that, Vicar," was the surprising reply, "what do *you* know about the Garden of Eden? You were never there at all."

YOUNG Herbert—and this is the last time he will be so described—started on his first job early in the New Year, reporting for duty in the Manor garden half an hour before his new world was really awake.

Wearing his Sunday suit, he looked rather like a young starling that had fallen out of its nest. Especially so when he perched on the corner of a cold frame waiting for the worst that could happen. There he was discovered by Mr. Addis, the head gardener, who viewed him with disfavour bordering upon actual dislike.

Mr. Addis had two boys cluttering up the place already; and furthermore, Mr. Addis had not been consulted. What with the wedding and going on the honeymoon, his new mistress had quite forgotten to mention to her head gardener that she had made an addition to his staff. That was a nice start!

One of the old-fashioned sort, Mr. Addis took his job seriously. He liked to give satisfaction, and how could he give satisfaction if everybody was pulling against him, as you might say? These things he explained, with some warmth, to Bert Pinnegar. Besides, concluded Mr. Addis, how could he spare the time to teach a beginner all there was to learn—even supposing that the beginner was willing to learn—which he, Mr. Addis, very much doubted. Was he, Bert Pinnegar, willing to learn all that he, Mr. Addis, was willing to teach him?

Bert Pinnegar replied that he knew “quite a bit, a’ready.”

“Ho-ho!” chuckled Mr. Addis. “Then perhaps you’ll be able to teach *me* a thing or two?”

Mr. Addis did not intend this to be taken literally, but his new assistant had come from a place where people said what they meant and meant what they said. “I don’t know,” Bert Pinnegar said, “but I’ll try.”

It took Mr. Addis a week to get over that!

Indeed, they had not had what you might call a cosy little chat together by the time the honeymoon was over and the new mistress had returned to the Manor. But Mr. Addis was a fair man.

He had seen Bert Pinnegar nipping around, had even caught him working overtime, and Mr. Addis had a weakness for small boys who worked overtime. So, when asked how the new boy was getting along, he replied that, given time, they might make something of Bert Pinnegar.

IN THE 'eighties, English gardens had achieved a restful homeliness that reflected the times. Life was placid, unimaginative and rather pleased with itself. The sort of world that bred the sort of man Mr. Addis was proud to be.

It was the age of established things. A position, once achieved, was secure. Mr. Addis had been head gardener at the Manor for thirty years and there would be no shifting him until they carried him away in his coffin. A *sound* world.

But not the sort of world in which a young man could win his spurs overnight. Promotion was slow and the young fellow coming up had to wait his turn, the same as his predecessors had had to do. That was the trouble. The old fellows hung on, doing the same thing in the same way, and not a new idea among the lot of them. Rule of thumb, they called it.

Leaning heavily on tradition, Mr. Addis allowed no unfortunate experiments to shake his authority and his young men, however they might grumble in secret, were quick to learn that what was good enough for Mr. Addis was good enough for them.

There was a lot of good in Mr. Addis, make no mistake about that. The respect he claimed from others was based firmly on the respect he paid to his job.

Among his many great qualities, Mr. Addis had a straight eye and a rare sense of colour. His daffodils marched two abreast in military precision—a formation achieved by stretching a long string between two pegs, along which bulbs were placed at regular intervals. No stragglers bivouacking in some corner. . . . Tulips were a bit more trouble. You not only had to get them into straight lines, but you had to see that colours didn't get mixed up. Once,

when the labels on the bulbs got mixed, the border under the south wall was a riot. All the colours ran into one another like a rainbow and there was the hell to pay. Mr. Addis raged up and down—until someone said how lovely the tulips looked and then he pretended he had done it on purpose. Artful old fox!

But, taking all in all, Bert Pinnegar got a good grounding in his new job—and he learned, too, that gardening is the hardest work in the world. Sometimes, when he had been scratching about on his hands and knees for a couple of hours, he almost envied his late school-fellows who led horses at plough and, after a day's work, rode back to the farm on the tail of a dung cart.

But such moments of depression were few. Gardening may be the most exasperating occupation under the sun, but it gives as much as it gets—no more, no less. Life in a garden is one long war with the powers of Evil, but the victory is worth winning. One minute you are flat on your face, but the next you're soaring on the wings of the morning. Bert Pinnegar didn't express his feelings in those exact words, but something inside him kept singing the same sort of song.



AT THE AGE of sixteen, Bert Pinnegar fell in love for the last time. Up at the house there was an under-housemaid named Soph. A lovely little thing, she knocked men all of a heap—and made women want to smack her. Already the housekeeper had an eye on her. "Mark my words," she said, "that girl will come to no good."

Having met with a rebuff from one of the young menservants in the house, Soph hatched up an excuse that would take her into the gardens. There she found Bert Pinnegar, picking off the dead pansy blossoms and fearing no evil.

"Lovely, aren't they!" she murmured. "All their little faces looking up at you."

Anyone who loved a garden walked straight into Bert Pinnegar's heart. He asked her if she was fond of flowers and she replied that she thought they were ever so nice. It must be wonderful to know all about flowers, the same as Bert Pinnegar did. . . . What flowers did Bert Pinnegar like best?

Bert Pinnegar hadn't much time for girls, but when you had one dumped right on top of you, so to speak, and when she asked your advice about things, *and* had hair the colour of ripe corn—well, that made a difference. He thought for a minute, then gave it as his considered opinion that there was a lot to be said for these new begonias. . . .

"That's funny," said Soph. "I like begonias better'n anything. I love begonias, I think they're ever so nice."

Rather elementary flattery this, but nobody had bothered to flatter Bert Pinnegar before. It was new—and it was nice.

Soph was always in and out of the garden after that. And Bert Pinnegar, being not entirely immune to feminine charm, was warmed and comforted when Soph cuddled up to him and listened to his lectures on proper gardening with the rapt attention of an almost-engaged girl at a Rugger match, who wishes she had brought another coat and wonders what it is all about, anyway.

As a matter of fact, Soph had a genuine passion for flowers—of the right sort, the showy sort that grew only under glass. And one morning, Soph demanded the price of her devotion. She was going to a dance and she had got to have orchids. She would meet Bert Pinnegar outside the back door at six and if he hadn't got them with him, then that was the finish of everything. The victim wriggled a bit, but when Soph went to the dance she took her orchids with her.

Who told who, and which of the village gossips told the housekeeper at the Manor did not transpire, but next morning Bert

Pinnegar had no sooner arrived at work than he was called up to the house. The inquiry was short. Bert Pinnegar admitted taking a spray of orchids. Had Mr. Addis given him permission? He had not. Was the spray already broken off? It was not. Why had he done such a dreadful thing? No answer. The housekeeper was considering her next question, when the door opened to admit the Lady of the Manor—the lady of the flower show—the timely visitor at the Vicarage. But, today, Bert Pinnegar wished her at the other end of the world, and farther away than that.

“Dear me,” she said. “Is anything the matter?”

The housekeeper gave her the findings of the inquiry. Young Pinnegar had stolen orchids from the greenhouse. The under-housemaid had worn them at a dance, to the scandal of the entire neighbourhood.

“Did you ask him to do it?” asked the Lady, turning to young Soph.

“No, ma’am. I wouldn’t think of doing such a thing.”

“Then why did he give them to you?” asked the Lady.

“Trying to get round me, he was. Always pestered me, he has; ever since he’s been here,” said young Soph, shaking her corn-coloured hair out of her candid blue eyes. It was an old trick and had got her out of more scrapes than this; but, somehow, the Lady wasn’t looking, and when she spoke, it was to the housekeeper.

“You know, Mrs. Garlick,” she said, “I’ve often thought we start these young girls earlier than we should. Tell her to pack her bag and we’ll send her home in the morning.”

“But I don’t want to go home,” screamed young Soph. “I’m not a kid any more. . . .”

“And what,” said the housekeeper, ignoring Soph, “are madame’s views concerning young Pinnegar?”

“Madame has no views concerning young Pinnegar,” replied the Lady, “except that little boys sometimes do very silly things—and are very sorry for them afterwards. I expect Mr. Addis will talk to him.”

MR. ADDIS talked to young Pinnegar with the end of a strap, until his arm ached; and young Pinnegar took it in very good part. Indeed, he welcomed it, for it left him with a nice clean feeling, as one who had received absolution after paying penance for his crime.

In our more enlightened age we realize that corporal punishment brutalizes the young offender, and that coercion in any form is to be deprecated. Mr. Addis did not know this. He gave young Pinnegar a damned good hiding; and, as gardening is not a sitting-down job, no great harm was done.

However, having turned his back on romance, Bert Pinnegar didn't know what to do with himself after work. And so he fell into the habit of staying on in the garden after the others had gone. There was always something he could turn his hand to: a bit of watering, a bit of weeding, a rambler that had broken away from a wall. . . . The most difficult thing was to keep out of the way. He didn't want people to think he was hanging round where he wasn't wanted; so he flitted about like a little ghost. But late one evening, when Bert Pinnegar was tidying up the edges of a grass path, the Lady—he hadn't seen her since that unfortunate affair in the housekeeper's room—came round the corner. "What are you doing there?" she asked.

"Nothingm'm," replied young Pinnegar, with the quick instinct of the small boy caught doing anything whatsoever.

"It looks very nice," said the Lady. "Did Mr. Addis tell you not to stop until you had finished the border?"

"Nom'm."

"But I can't have you working all hours of the day and night. People will call me a slave driver. You should be playing. . . ."

"I like work better'n I like play," he muttered.

The Lady laughed. "What a funny little boy!" she said.

This upset Bert Pinnegar no end. Here was he, turning seventeen, liable to start smoking any minute now, having to sit there and be called a funny little boy. There were times when you had

to speak up for yourself, and this was one of them.

"There's nothing to laugh at," he said. "I've seen *you* working in the garden and you don't get paid for it."

"That's different," she laughed. "I'm only a beginner. You're a real gardener, so you shouldn't be expected to work for nothing."

"Nobody expects me to work for nothing. . . ."

"Perhaps not, but when you stay on for hours in my garden I get something for nothing."

"You're kindly welcome," said young Pinnegar, and this time they both laughed. . . .

And so, almost any evening after that Bert Pinnegar and the Lady could be seen toiling together in the Manor vineyard. The season was dry, and most of the job consisted of carrying water-cans. But the labour was mixed up with delicious little talks about flowers and shrubs, in which young Pinnegar was most surprisingly able to hold his own. He dealt in fact, learned the hard way, and Mrs. Charteris found some of her more nebulous theories—gleaned almost entirely from books—blown sky-high. She meant to be mistress in her own garden, but coming from London, where flowers had bloomed for her in expensive West End shops, she had a lot to learn on the practical side. So a course of Bert Pinnegar was good for Mrs. Charteris; and a course of Mrs. Charteris was more than good for Bert Pinnegar. . . . How else could he have got his tongue round all those Latin names?

Every evening she taught him a new word, and if he didn't remember it the next night there was trouble. . . . "I'm surprised at you, Pinnegar!" she'd said when he had called a *Fritillaria meleagris* a wild tulip. "After all the trouble I've taken. You've got a head like an empty bucket."

Something had to be done about that one. Empty bucket, indeed! And then, just at the right minute, he remembered what Mary Brain had told him about those tall yellow flowers that look like foxgloves but aren't.

"When is a mullein not a mullein?" he asked.

Mrs. Charteris tried to wriggle out of it by saying that a mullein *was* a mullein. Then she gave up.

"When it's a *Verbascum*," announced young Pinnegar. "Now who's got a head like an empty bucket?"

That was how it had all happened. Quite easily, in a spirit of fun, the small pilgrim had been led to the very gates of his Celestial City. For how can anyone become a proper gardener unless he can call flowers by their Latin names? Sitting among his cushions, Old Herbaceous reckoned that he owed everything to those quiet evenings in the old Manor garden.

GETTING on in the world is never quite the happy business that young people suppose it will be.

Looking back, Old Herbaceous could remember very little of his next ten years, except that they weren't worth remembering. The first thrill of being allowed to work in a garden was over, and the joy of achievement was yet to come. . . . And here was Bert Pinnegar, at thirty, still being treated like a kid of no account.

Just when he was most despondent Kruger began making trouble in South Africa, and one of the young fellows in the greenhouse was sent out to do something about it. Bert Pinnegar, being turned down for military service, got his job.

He wasn't too pleased at first. Since that affair with young Soph, he had kept away from the greenhouses. Also, he had the average countryman's mistrust of exotic things that required glass. Still, a head gardener had to know a bit about everything, and if you didn't take on a job, somebody else did and got ahead of you. Besides, glass *was* useful for bringing the stuff along and Mrs. Charteris was a rare one for having things a bit ahead of time. Always chivvying them about that, she was. But Mr. Addis was one too many for her and was always quoting Scripture—"their fruits in due season"—to prove that he had the Lord on his side.

Thinking things over, Bert Pinnegar reckoned that there might, after all, be something to be said for glass. What about straw-

berries, for instance? It nearly broke his heart to go out some morning, after a ground frost, and see a little black eye in the middle of every blossom. A whole strawberry bed ruined in a night! Without telling anybody, he planted half a dozen runners in pots and brought them into the greenhouse in October. But nothing happened. The plants just dwindled away. Then he remembered that it wasn't the plants that suffered from the winter frosts. It was only the blossoms. So the next year he waited until February and tried the experiment again.

IN THE meantime, Mrs. Charteris had been keeping an eye on his work in the greenhouses and was disappointed in what she saw. Until now her policy of bringing him along by easy stages had shown excellent results. But either he was losing interest or, what was more likely, he lacked the education for higher-grade work. Throughout that winter she had offered him suggestions and given him every possible encouragement, but he never seemed to settle down in his new greenhouse job. Mrs. Charteris finally decided that she would probably have to make a change.

Then a surprising thing happened. One afternoon, about the end of April, there was a pleasant little tea-party at the Manor—a gathering of old friends to meet the estate solicitor who was down from London. The visitors were settling down to enjoy the good things on the tea-table when old General Henderson gave tongue like an old hound in cover: "My God, Charlotte! Strawberries in April! *Where* did you find those?"

Then Mrs. Charteris saw them: a dish of such heavenly strawberries as you had no right to expect until the last week of June. If the General was seeing things, so was his hostess.

"Where *did* you get them?" chorused the ladies.

Mrs. Charteris was asking herself the same question. But she kept her head and rang for the housekeeper.

"Pinnegar brought them in from the greenhouse, ma'am, five minutes ago."

So Mrs. Charteris sent for Bert Pinnegar and, when he appeared, asked him to explain to the General how he managed to have strawberries ready for the table so early in the season.

So Bert Pinnegar explained, carefully and in simple terms, how it had all happened. How it was no use starting the runners under glass in the autumn. . . . How you leave them out in the open, like the rest of the strawberries, until about February. Then bring them into the greenhouse—so as to have them well under cover before they began to think about flowering. That was all there was to it.

General Henderson thanked Mr. Pinnegar, who was about to shuffle out backwards when his mistress stopped him. "Just a minute, Pinnegar. Which greenhouse did you use for this . . . interesting experiment?"

"The little one at the end, ma'am; next to the dump."

"Strange. I've never seen strawberries growing there," said Mrs. Charteris.

"I put them under the bench whenever you were about."

"Why did you do that?"

"Because," said Mr. Pinnegar, "I wanted it to be a surprise like."

"Very well, Pinnegar, you may go."

Mr. Pinnegar went.

There is no suggestion here that Bert Pinnegar had made horticultural history. There was nothing new about forcing strawberries under glass fifty years ago, but his bit of original thinking paid dividends. Mrs. Charteris no longer thought about making a change. After all, the conventional greenhouse was becoming a bit of a bore. Mostly just gloxinias—and more gloxinias. Very nice, of course, but now she came to think of it, she never had been keen on gloxinias. . . . And it *had* been rather sweet of Pinnegar—the way he produced strawberries out of his hat—like a conjurer. . . .



THE Victorian Age, with its smug, stuffy trappings, was succeeded by the brittle sophistications of the Edwardian era. Everyone was critical of everything that had gone before. Everyone had a better way of doing things. The sort of world, in fact, that did not suit Mr. Addis at all. So that everyone was a little relieved when he was swept up to heaven in a cloud of exasperation and Bert Pinnegar reigned in his stead.

Not that Mr. Pinnegar, as we must now call him, escaped the critical attitude of younger contemporaries. Walking through the Manor gardens, with all his newly acquired honours thick upon him, he found young Jim Mustoe's prong lying athwart a path, while young Mustoe and a couple of cronies lurked nearby, hoping to get a rise out of their new boss.

"Whose prong is this?" asked Mr. Pinnegar.

"Mine, Bert," replied the owner.

"Pick it up," ordered Mr. Pinnegar.

"Pick it up yourself," said young Mustoe.

The newly ordained head gardener couldn't hit young Mustoe on the nose, because, physically, young Mustoe was a bigger and better man. Neither could he report him to Higher Authority, because that would be an admission that he wasn't man enough to control his staff. Young Mustoe and his associates grinned happily.

Yet Mr. Pinnegar didn't seem at all worried. Quite friendly, in fact. "Look here, Jim," he said. "Suppose, as well might be, you had just been made head gardener, and suppose some silly young devil told you to pick up his prong—what would you do?"

"I'd see him damned first," said young Mustoe.

"Quite right, Jim," agreed the new head gardener, with an approving nod. "Right first time. If you go on like that, Jim,

you'll be head gardener yourself, one of these fine days."

Dazzled by this prospect, young Mustoe stooped to pick up his prong; but his new guv'nor hadn't finished with him yet. "And, Jim," he added benevolently, "when you're head gardener, always see that the other fellows call you Mr. Mustoe; a bit difficult at first, Jim, but you'll find it pays in the long run."

"Yes, Mr. Pinnegar," replied young Mustoe.

Mr. Pinnegar wandered away. He had won his first skirmish and, so far as his staff was concerned, there were no further battles to be fought.

WHEN YOU have nothing to do but sit and remember, there isn't much escapes you. Yet, every now and again, Old Herbaceous would find himself forgetting some of the most important bits.

For instance, he would be telling about Mrs. Charteris when someone would say: "But, what was her husband doing all this time?" And he would realize that he had forgotten Captain Charteris; probably because he didn't often come into the garden.

Captain Charteris had been mad on horses, spent most of his time in the stables and was killed at a point-to-point meeting over in the Duke's country. His wife had been standing in the judges' wagon when it happened. . . .

"Poor woman," they would say, "losing her husband like that. Wasn't she terribly upset?" And Old Herbaceous, now remembering those dreadful weeks, would reply testily that "it would have been odd if she hadn't been." After which he would shut up like a rusty old jack knife—not because he lacked feeling for the unfortunate Captain, but because he had forgotten all about him and didn't like to admit it.

But if Old Herbaceous sometimes let his mind slip, like the smooth cogs of a worn wheel, there was one date he never forgot: that was the day in 1913 when Mrs. Charteris had taken him to the great Spring Flower Show at Chelsea.

Mr. Pinnegar expected something out of the ordinary but, like

the Queen of Sheba, the half had not been told him. The exhibits were, of course, wonderful, but what took his eye was the way owners of great estates and their head gardeners strolled through the big marquees, chatting together. It was difficult sometimes to tell them apart, what with the employers wearing rough country tweeds and the gardeners in their Sunday best, you were often left wondering which was master and which was man.

While Mrs. Charteris was resting on a rustic seat she had purchased, Mr. Pinnegar followed such a couple in order to study this social phenomenon. He noticed that although the master did most of the talking, his head gardener was always at hand to pull him ashore if he got into deep waters. . . . At a rhododendron stand, for instance, where a discreet salesman waited with an open order book. . . .

"Yes," said the master. "I think we'd better have some of those. What d'you think, Perkins?"

"Very fine; very fine indeed, Sir John. If you think they'd *do* in our soil. We're a bit on the wet side—as you reminded me, when I wanted to plant that magnolia. . . ."

Sir John rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Ah, yes, the soil! Ours is a bit tricky for rhododendrons, eh, Perkins?"

"And the lime; *that's* our trouble," the head gardener confided to the salesman. "You can't go against lime. Wonderful for irises but, as Sir John says, a bit tricky for rhododendrons."

After half an hour of similar experiences, it was a different Mr. Pinnegar who returned to his employer, dozing comfortably upon her rustic seat. Mrs. Charteris did not know, and Mr. Pinnegar did not tell her, that all her troubles were over; henceforth she had nothing to fear. Whatever foolish decisions she might be tempted to make, there would be her head gardener, ever on the alert to see that she did not waste *her* money or *his* time. In that exciting moment Mr. Pinnegar donned a new mantle of self-confidence, and it fitted him like a glove. . . .

The next morning, bright and early, Mr. Pinnegar swept

through the gardens like a *mistral* roaring down the Rhône Valley. Nothing like starting as you meant to go on. . . . Time he had that bed ready for those begonias. Mr. Pinnegar took off his coat and was getting down to the job when his mistress walked across the diamond-spangled lawn. "What are you doing, Pinnegar?"

"Getting ready for the begonias."

"I'm not having begonias there this year," said Mrs. Charteris.

"No begonias?" Mr. Pinnegar could hardly believe his ears. "And what would you propose to be putting in their place?" he added, in what he considered his dangerous voice.

"I haven't decided," said Mrs. Charteris.

"They won't *do*," rumbled Mr. Pinnegar.

"What won't *do*?" asked his mistress.

Mr. Pinnegar shifted his ground. "We always *have* had begonias," he said. "But, of course, if you insist . . ."

"I *do* insist, Pinnegar," said Mrs. Charteris; and that was the end—for the time being—of a head gardener's dream of new worlds to conquer.

How Old Herbaceous used to chuckle over that bit of bother. It was all forgotten in a week, but it hadn't been funny at the time. Shook Mr. Pinnegar no end! He was almost chucking up his job for a day or two, but you can't be angry, not for long, in a garden. And Mrs. Charteris didn't make the mistake of rubbing it in. They very soon got back on to the old footing.

And then the war came and all the young chaps went and the two of them were left to make the best they could of a bad job. That was what pulled them together. No time for little squabbles—no sense in quarrelling about the pattern of the curtains when the house is on fire. . . .

AT FIFTY a man is so set in his habits that his neighbours know the best and the worst about him. They said of Mr. Pinnegar that he had "a fairish opinion of hisself," but allowed that his head was "screwed on better'n most." Mr. Pinnegar *was* serious-minded,

but, like many self-educated men, he wasn't nearly as sure of himself as he seemed. If he blustered a bit when trying to convince others, it was only to convince himself.

So it was that Mr. Pinnegar felt a bit uncertain one Sunday afternoon when he was summoned to the garden and introduced to a Lord Gratton.

"Lord Gratton wants you to do something for him," Mrs. Charteris said. "I'll leave you together."

Mr. Pinnegar had seen lords on platforms, but this was the first time he had ever spoken to one. How did you address a lord? What did you talk to them about? Then he realized that he was being spoken to.

Lord Gratton didn't waste time getting down to tacks. He was president of the big combined County Show and his committee, looking round for someone to take charge of the horticultural section, had chosen Mr. Pinnegar. There wasn't another man in the county, they had agreed, so capable of doing the job. "Now, Mr. Pinnegar, what about it? Are you going to help us?"

Mr. Pinnegar was flabbergasted. All his senses clamoured against being saddled with this awful responsibility. All very well at local shows—where he had judged many times—but to be stuck up on a pedestal and be stared at by half the county . . .

"Sorry, m'Lord," said Mr. Pinnegar, "it can't be done. Can't spare the time, not possibly. Too much to do at home."

Lord Gratton demolished *that* argument. Mrs. Charteris had very generously agreed to release her head gardener for the duration of the show. Besides, there would be junior judges to sort out the various classes and all Mr. Pinnegar would have to do would be to come in at the last minute and make the final selections. . . .

"Sorry, m'Lord," said Mr. Pinnegar. "I'd do anything to oblige your lordship, anything in reason, but it can't be done."

So spoke Mr. Pinnegar, yet somewhere at the back of his mind he caught a glimpse of a small boy hiding in a corner of the tent at his first flower show, watching those other judges and vowing that

he, too, one day . . . But it was too late now; Lord Gratton was saying: "Very well, old chap, if that's how you feel about it, we'll let the matter drop."

"I'm truly sorry, m'Lord," groaned the unhappy gardener, "but you see how it is. . . . No offence, m'Lord. . . . ?"

"Good heavens, my dear fellow, of course not. We'll find somebody. Don't give it another thought."

At this moment Mrs. Charteris reappeared.

"It's no good, Charlotte," said Lord Gratton. "He won't do it."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Charteris. "Of course he'll do it. Now don't be silly, Pinnegar. It was very sensible of the committee to think of you; and how can Lord Gratton *possibly* go back to them with such a message? Really, Pinnegar! I never heard of such a thing. . . . We'll drive over tomorrow, Harry, and you can give us our marching orders."

As Mr. Pinnegar watched the two old friends wander away down the broad path he breathed a long sigh of relief. It had been a narrow squeak, and no mistake. . . .

THE SHOW was a tremendous success: fine weather, record entries, exhibits of high quality, and everyone agreed that the judges had done a difficult job in first-rate style.

Mr. Pinnegar entered the luncheon tent in great humour. Funny, he thought, how you let yourself be frightened by little things, just because you hadn't done them before. Here he was, having the time of his life; regular cock-of-the-walk, as you might say, sitting at the top table, swapping stories with a couple of other experts. . . .

As Mr. Pinnegar leaned back in his chair enjoying a most unaccustomed cigar, a hastily scribbled note was placed quietly on the table. Mr. Pinnegar put on his steel-rimmed spectacles and read as follows: "You reply to the toast of the judges. Keep it short. We're all getting a bit saddlesore! *Gratton.*"

Mr. Pinnegar's first impulse was to be sick; his second, to get

under the table. What he actually did was to wave a protesting hand at the president, who waved back and pledged his wretched victim in a glass of excellent port. . . . Next thing, the toastmaster was bawling his death sentence: "My Lord Chairman—My Lords—Ladies and Gentlemen, pray silence for Mr. Herbert Pinnegar!"

Mr. Pinnegar placed his cigar carefully in his glass of port, rose heavily to his feet, and found himself standing in complete darkness, with a roaring sound in his ears, like a train rushing through a tunnel. . . . And then, ever so far away, out of the blackness, came a tiny spot of light which got bigger and bigger. . . . He was back in the big marquee and everyone was clapping.

"My Lord Chairman, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen!" said Mr. Pinnegar. "When I see working gardeners and owners of gardens, all mixed up together as we are today, it makes me think of a lot of lions lying down with a lot of lambs. I won't say which are the lions or which are the lambs. (*Laughter.*) Some people think we head gardeners spend our days bullying our employers, snapping their heads off when they want to pick a few flowers for the table, and so on. That may be true in some cases, but not in mine. I'm frightened to death of my Lady, and I don't care who knows it. (*Laughter.*) I won't say she knows more about flowers than I do (*laughter*) because that wouldn't be true (*more laughter*); but she knows what she wants, and I see that she gets it. (*Hear, Hear!*) I've worked forty years in the same garden and we're just getting it into goodish shape. Give me another forty years and we'll have something to show you. Well, the chairman tells me you're all getting a bit saddlesore (*loud laughter*), so, thanking you kindly for the nice things you've said about us judges, we'll let it go at that."

Mr. Pinnegar sat down. Once again the president leaned forward and raised his glass in token of a job well done.



IF YOU could peel the years from a man's life, as you do the leaves from a globe artichoke, you would find him having his happiest time between the ages of fifty and sixty-five. The awful anxieties of youth have resolved themselves. . . . Achievement has not lost its glamour. . . . Success, glorious and satisfying, lies just round the corner. . . .

Old Herbaceous reckoned he could remember most things. But when he looked back, the years between the two wars had a habit of running into one another. Sometimes he would put on his steel-rimmed spectacles and peer at the inscription on a Challenge Bowl, won outright against all comers, to remind himself of a date that had slipped his memory. Or he would run his fingers through the first prize award cards, which traced, like footsteps in wet sand, his triumphal progress round the principal flower shows of Britain. Having judged at shows all over the country, he was almost a national figure in horticultural circles. Secretaries of shows would write to him, and once—at Southport—there had been an interview with him in the local paper. “The *doyen* of the prize ring,” they had called him; and though he wasn’t quite sure what that meant, he had cut out the notice and placed it carefully among his other trophies.

During those splendid years Mrs. Charteris had been as proud of her head gardener as he had been proud of himself. Together, they had worked and planned until the Manor garden had become one of the show places of the country. People came half across England—even from America. . . .

It was too good to last. For the second time in a quarter of a century Mr. Pinnegar woke to find that the bottom had fallen out of his little world. Once again Britain was

at war, and a garden didn't matter any more.

Of course, it had all happened before. But Mr. Pinnegar, now nearing seventy, wasn't quite the man he had been twenty-five years ago. Then he had even found it in his heart to laugh when they dug up the flowers and planted potatoes along the borders. But not this time. He began to feel a fierce resentment against everything and everybody mixed up in this mad endeavour to destroy the gracious pattern of the world he had known. . . .

Old Herbaceous, as we must call him from now on, was also beginning to worry about Mrs. Charteris. Here she was, as near eighty as made no difference, and the whole estate on her hands. She was getting so old and frail they had bought her a bath-chair, so she could sit out in the sun and enjoy the bit of garden they had been able to keep going. Sometimes she and her gardener would talk about the war, and Mrs. Charteris would say that if more people spent their time growing flowers, the world would be a happier place. . . .

Mrs. Charteris was very old and very tired, but, as the doctor said, there was nothing really wrong with her. She couldn't, however, go on running this rambling old place, he said. What she needed was a nice suite in a private hotel on the south coast—somewhere like Torquay; no trying winters, no servant problems, friends dropping in to see her. . . .

And so it was settled. Strange young men, solicitors, valuers, auctioneers, made all the arrangements, and everything went like clockwork. In the village they said it would kill the old lady, dragging her half across England, but when it came to the point Mrs. Charteris seemed quite happy and excited about it all. Her only worry was the garden—and Pinnegar would look after that. Yes, she would have a nice long talk with Pinnegar. . . . So the bath-chair was brought out again and Old Herbaceous wheeled his Lady round the garden for the last time.

It was a lovely May morning, dew on the grass, bees buzzing round the hives and all the apple trees full of pink blossom. . . .

Up in the big elm a cuckoo was calling. . . . Just one of those May mornings.

When they reached the shelter of the old box hedge, Mrs. Charteris told him to stop. "Now, Pinnegar," she said, pointing to the step of the bath-chair, "sit down and listen carefully. The Manor is going to be sold and I am going away. But I want you to stay here and keep an eye on the garden.

"You must try and like the new people. It may not be easy at first; but listen to what they have to say and try to understand their point of view. If you find you can't get on with them, you will have to leave; but I hope it won't come to that, because I want to feel that you are always here to look after everything.

"Now, Pinnegar, *don't* be difficult. Sometimes, when I ask you to do something you don't like, you shut up like an oyster, and your face looks like a bowl of sour milk. I know you don't mean anything by it, but you can't do that with strangers, Pinnegar! After all, it will be their garden and, however wrong we may think they are, we shall have to make the best of it. . . .

"Of course, you can *advise* them, but when you see they have made up their minds, do everything you can to help them. And, Pinnegar, when they have to admit they were wrong, *don't rub it in*. That's a failing of yours, Pinnegar, rubbing it in. Sometimes you look so virtuous that I could smack you. You don't actually say 'I told you so!' but you *look* it, and that's much worse."

Old Herbaceous was a bit upset by all this talk of being difficult and rubbing it in, but then he remembered that his Lady wasn't quite herself and was probably imagining things again. So he kept his mouth shut, and Mrs. Charteris went on:

"You know, Pinnegar, people aren't really fond of someone else's garden. They pretend to be and try to say all the right things, but you can always tell. . . . That's why I want you to stay here as long as you can and write to me sometimes, so that I know how you are getting on. . . .

"You have been very kind to me, Pinnegar, and I have always

been fond of you—even when you were being a little difficult. I haven't forgotten the early strawberries—perhaps they will let you send me some every year. And don't forget, Pinnegar; always be a good boy. . . . Do what Mr. Addis tells you . . . and learn a new Latin name *every* day. . . .”

Old Herbaceous looked at the sweet, tired face, and something came up into his throat, threatening to choke him. . . .

“Don't snivel, Pinnegar,” said Mrs. Charteris. “Nice little boys don't snivel. Use your handkerchief!”

So Mrs. Charteris went to live at Torquay and Old Herbaceous settled down to carry out the conditions of his trust. The trouble was that he wasn't so young himself. The war dragged on and none of the young chaps came back to lend him a hand. The place was beginning to look like a wilderness; the shrubbery was a jungle, and as for the grass. . . .

He got to hate grass in those days. Sometimes, the old man would stagger out with a scythe, as bent as himself, looking like Father Time trying to catch up with the calendar. But it made no difference. The grass went on growing, always where it was least wanted.

And then, of course, he had to keep an eye on all the people who pretended that they wanted to buy the place. They came nosing round, asking silly questions and running everything down. Others said how wonderful it all was—but that was the last you saw of them. Of all the people who had passed through his hands, there wasn't one he would have liked for a gov'nor. Perhaps working under a real lady like Mrs. Charteris all those years had spoiled him; or new times might have brought new manners. It was hard to say. . . .

Just when it seemed that nothing would ever happen again, the war came to an end. Old Herbaceous was as near seventy-five as made no difference, but he felt as fit as ever. Now, with the young chaps back, he'd have the place straight again in no time. But

then the Manor was sold at last to a Colonel Widford, who was with the Army of Occupation in Germany. Mrs. Widford was living with her parents in Scotland, and there would be no one in residence for quite a while yet. So Old Herbaceous continued to carry on in the garden single-handed. . . .

One afternoon, when he was trying to separate the weeds from the hardy cyclamens, a strange man came wandering across the garden. "Hullo, grandfather," he said, "catching worms for a day's fishing? Where's the head gardener?"

Mr. Pinnegar, who had been kneeling for rather a long time, rose carefully to his feet. "You've got eyes," he said. "Why don't you use them?"

"No need to be impudent," said the young fellow.

Mr. Pinnegar said nothing—with great dignity—and the stranger, up against something he didn't quite understand, shifted his ground. "I don't want to stop you getting on with your job," he said, "but I've got to speak to someone in charge. Who is the head gardener?"

"I am," replied Mr. Pinnegar.

"Good God!" said the stranger. "Been here long?"

"Sixty years," said Mr. Pinnegar.

"Good God!" said the younger man.

"And who might *you* be?" asked Mr. Pinnegar.

"Colonel Widford's new agent," was the reply.

"Agents!" said Mr. Pinnegar thoughtfully. "Agents! I don't hold with 'em. A sort of go-between, I take it; not quite master and not quite man. Not that I want to hurt your feelings, young fellow . . ."

He had taken the wind out of the young fellow's sails all right, but that was just the beginning of the trouble.

The agent, having been once bitten, worked from a safe distance thereafter. He would send workers over from the estate department, but they always came with definite instructions and a specific job to do. So that, as time went on, Old Herbaceous found

himself more and more isolated. He would come in the morning, get down to any job that needed doing, go home to his dinner, come back and work until dark—and not a soul would come near him.

Mr. Pinnegar had never been treated like this and he didn't understand it at all. All this shuffling about, without saying anything, got on your nerves; and as for giving the young chaps orders over his head, that was just rank bad manners, and no other word for it.

Sometimes he would get hot under the collar and decide to find out exactly where he stood. Was he head gardener or wasn't he? He would take off his old green apron and start towards the estate office. Then his heart would fail him. It wasn't so much that he was afraid of losing his job as that he couldn't face life without his garden. It wasn't the money. . . . There was enough in the old tea-pot to see him through—if they'd let him work for nothing. . . . Then there was Mrs. Charteris, down at Torquay. He'd promised her to keep an eye on things.

So things crawled miserably along until one day he was told that he was wanted up at the estate office. The agent was sitting at a big desk and wasted no time. "Well, Pinnegar," he said briskly, "the sale has gone through at last. Takes a lot of time, winding up a big estate like this, but everything is finally signed, sealed and settled. I thought you'd like to know."

"Very interesting," said Old Herbaceous. "Very interesting indeed." Now why had this busy young fellow brought him all the way up the hill to tell him that?

"Your own position," continued the agent, with a shade less confidence, "is a trifle . . . nebulous, shall we say. Now that the estate has definitely changed hands, any arrangement made by the late owner naturally goes by the board. . . ."

"Mrs. Charteris always told me——" began Mr. Pinnegar, but the agent cut him short.

"The late owner," he said irritably, "certainly expressed the

wish that you should be a sort of . . . ah . . . 'guardian angel,' but guardian angels can be rather inconvenient things in a modern world. In a word, Pinnegar, I could only offer you a subordinate position under the new head gardener and, to be frank, I hope you will agree, as a sensible man, that this would be a most unsatisfactory compromise."

Then the agent shot his final bolt: "And, of course, there is the question of the cottage."

"Which cottage?" asked the old man.

"The cottage in which you are living," replied the agent. "That is a tied cottage and we shall need it for the new head gardener."

"Mrs. Charteris always told me——"

"Don't keep on bringing Mrs. Charteris into this," groaned the agent. "If Mrs. Charteris wanted this place as a rest home for tired retainers, she shouldn't have sold it. All this mixing up of sentiment and business makes everything so difficult. How can I get the estate in any sort of order if I'm met at every turn by the whimsies of an old woman who wasn't quite right in her head?"

Old Herbaceous pulled himself to his feet, and there was about him an air of strange dignity as he closed that rather awkward interview.

"Well, Mr. Agent," he said, "you've been very straightforward with me and I'm going to be very straightforward with you. What you say about the garden is true enough. It's been allowed to get into a state of neglect, and 'twill take a good man to make it half as good as it was. Good luck to him! And what you say about me is true. What sort of figure should I cut, doing odd jobs and running errands? So you can strike *me* off your list of troubles. As to the cottage, I'm not going to pretend that I'm happy about leaving it, but if it's tied to the estate, there's nothing more to be said. All reasonable and above-board, Mr. Agent, except one thing . . .

"You think my Lady was off her head because she found time,

in the middle of all her own troubles, to think about an old chap who had worked for her for sixty years. That shows how little you know. There's still room for a bit of kindness in the world, and the next time you feel like taking a short cut across people's feelings when you want to get somewhere in a hurry, you might bear that in mind."



UNCERTAIN as to what his next move should be, Old Herbaceous went to work in the garden as usual the following day. And, after wrestling with a rebellious rambler rose most of the morning, he was on his way home to lunch, when a stately-looking old gentleman hailed him from the terrace. Unused to such courtesies, Old Herbaceous was doubtful whether to respond or no, but finally went across to the stranger.

"What's your name?" asked the stranger.

"Pinnegar," replied the old man.

"Good heavens, I remember you. Mrs. Charteris wrote me all about you," the old gentleman said. "You must be the chap who brought in those early strawberries the last time I was down here. How long ago was that?"

"Forty years, if it's a day."

"As long as that!" the stranger said, half to himself. "Yes, I suppose it must be. And what have you been doing all these years?"

"Just muddling round," said Old Herbaceous. "And a pretty good mess I seem to have made of it all. You would be the young solicitor that came down from London that day?"

"We were all young once," said the gentleman, passing reflective fingers through what were left of his grey hairs, and introduced himself: Mr. Billiter, of Billiter, Billiter & Billiter. . . .

OLD Mr. Billiter had been happy when his younger partners had handed over to him the documents relating to the sale of the Charteris estate. He had, in fact, spent happy months with those dusty records. He had always liked Charlotte Charteris; indeed, when he had been going down there pretty often, it had been touch and go whether they wouldn't. . . .

At which point old Mr. Billiter had shaken his more sentimental memories aside and concentrated on the job in hand. For weeks he had vetted possible purchasers as to their financial standing, had wrangled with opposing legal forces and, finally, had given his blessing to the offer made by Colonel Widford, an excellent young fellow who knew a good horse, had won the D.S.O., and, greatest recommendation of all, was a member of Mr. Billiter's own club.

Old Mr. Billiter had studied all aspects of the case with meticulous care. He knew all the details by heart and, when he had passed them along for final endorsement, he had done so with the comfortable feeling that Charlotte, bless her heart, had not been rooked by one of these smart young fellows who thought they knew everything. In this flush of satisfaction, tinged with the rosy tints of ancient loyalties, it had occurred to old Mr. Billiter to run down and settle any little details that might be outstanding.

So it was, now, that at twelve o'clock, he was standing on the terrace with Charlotte's old gardener. And, having had nothing since an unusually early breakfast, old Mr. Billiter was getting hungry. Where, he asked, could he find a decent hotel—and a cab to take him there.

Mr. Pinnegar had to laugh at that. The nearest hotel was nine miles away and there were no such things as cabs in those parts. "But if you'd see fit to join me in a snack . . ." Mr. Pinnegar offered with respectful hesitancy.

"I can think of nothing I'd like better," declared Mr. Billiter.

"Then you're kindly welcome," said Mr. Pinnegar.

At the cottage there was plenty of cheese, all the onions you

could eat and a bottle of beer to wash them down. When Mr. Billiter said it was the best meal he had enjoyed for years, he was speaking the truth.

"You've a nice little place here," he said, looking round the pleasant room.

"I'm leaving it," said the old man.

"Leaving it? Why, isn't it good enough for an old chap like you?"

"Tied cottage," was the reply. "Wanted for the new man."

"Tied cottage!" exploded the solicitor. "Why, man, Mrs. Charteris only sold the place on the distinct understanding that you weren't to be disturbed. There's a special clause giving you a life interest; I drew it up myself. Who's been telling you this fairy tale about tied cottages and—all such nonsense? There must be an agent or someone in charge."

"Yes," replied the old man, "there's an agent, sure enough."

"Where is this young jack-in-office? I'll enjoy a little chat with him. . . . Look here, Pinnegar, this is my card. If you have any more trouble, write to me at that address. . . ." And Mr. Billiter stormed out of the cottage and headed up the path towards the estate office.

What there transpired was never revealed, but it was a chastened young agent who called at the cottage later that afternoon. The lawyers, it seemed, had made a mistake: there *was* a clause in the contract to the effect that Mr. Herbert Pinnegar should continue to occupy his cottage—if you ever heard such nonsense!

"I reckoned," said Mr. Pinnegar, "somebody had slipped up. However, all's well that ends well. Now we know where we stand."

"Obviously," said the agent, "owing to this stupid blunder, we shall have to consider the problem from a new angle."

"What problem?" asked Mr. Pinnegar.

"This question of the cottage," replied the agent. "We must try

to hit upon some compromise, agreeable to everybody. Now, Mr. Pinnegar, as a reasonable man. . . .”

“But I’m not a reasonable man,” said Mr. Pinnegar. “That’s the trouble. I’m *difficult*. Ask Mrs. Charteris. Ask any of your young chaps. They’ll tell you I’m just a contraptious old——”

The agent gave a rather watery smile at this little joke. “Yes, but, Mr. Pinnegar, you wouldn’t force a technical advantage to such a ridiculous extent. Think of your position, living here right in the middle of the estate, knowing that everybody. . . .”

“What you’re trying to say,” chuckled Old Herbaceous, “is that you’d make it damned awkward for me.”

The agent waved such an unworthy thought aside. “Mr. Pinnegar,” he wheedled, “I appeal to your better nature.”

“Mr. Agent,” replied the old man, “not so long ago you told me that business and sentiment didn’t mix. Now you’re saying just the opposite—swinging round like a weathercock. And a weathercock is only good to show which way the wind is blowing.”

“Very well,” said the other, “I’ve nothing more to say. You’ll find this ridiculous clause won’t hold good, not for a moment, in a court of law. You’ll be hearing from our solicitors.”

“In that case,” replied Mr. Pinnegar, “you’d better have the names of *my* lawyers—all of them. . . . Now, where’s that card?”

And, putting on his steel-rimmed spectacles, he read: “Messrs. Billiter, Billiter & Billiter, Leadenhall Street, London, E.C.”

AFTER the interview Old Herbaceous did not go back to the garden. Instead, he sat at his cottage window, wondering how he was going to fill in his time for the rest of his days. If he was no longer Mr. Pinnegar, head gardener at the Manor, who was he? He felt terribly lonely and out of everything.

As Christmas came along he was feeling sorrier for himself than ever. All the other cottages were in a hubbub of excitement, but the only effect it had on the old man was that the woman who

came in to "do" for him scrambled through her work and was gone before you could look round. No time, even, for a bit of gossip, though she *did* mention, just before she rushed off, that Colonel and Mrs. Widford were up at the Manor and there would be a bit of a house-party for Christmas. But that only made him think of the old days, when Mrs. Charteris would have them all in, one by one, wish them a Merry Christmas, and hand them the presents she had bought for them in London.

Nothing like that in these days, decided Old Herbaceous. Most of that good old feeling had gone out of everything and it was at Christmas that you missed such things most.

Thus brooding, the old man was suddenly roused by a bang on the door and a cheerful voice asking if there was anyone at home. Without waiting for an answer, the visitor, a rather jolly, middle-aged gentleman, marched into the room, announced himself as Colonel Widford, placed his shooting stick in a corner and made himself comfortable. "So *you're* the Mr. Pinnegar I've been hearing so much about," he said cheerfully.

Old Herbaceous definitely felt uncomfortable. Soon the Colonel would be hearing about the trouble over the cottage, if he hadn't heard already. Then he might not feel so friendly. Well, no good ever came of covering things up. Better face it:

"I hope, Colonel, you didn't think me disobliging over the cottage."

"That's partly what I came to talk to you about," said Colonel Widford. "I met old Billiter at my club, and he told me something; then I met my agent, and *he* told me something, and putting two and two together, I'm afraid you've had a rather raw deal. Now then, what can we do to put matters right?"

"If you really need the cottage . . ." began Old Herbaceous.

"Oh, damn the cottage!" said the Colonel. "It isn't ours to begin with, and if it was you could have it, and welcome. What I've been wondering is, how an active old chap like you is going to fill in his time. What do you do with yourself all day?"

"Nothing," said the old man.

"That's what I thought. Now, suppose we gave you the end greenhouse, to run in your own way. We're very short-handed, and I should be glad to have it off my hands. My wife is always wanting table flowers and she's got a *very* sweet tooth, so you can't go far wrong. What d'you say?"

"If your lady is at all partial to early strawberries . . ."

"My dear fellow, if you put a plate of early strawberries in front of my wife, her eyes will pop out of her head like a—like a prawn! But you'll have to keep the greenhouse locked up, or you'll lose the lot. Here's the key. And many thanks!"

Colonel Widford was half out of the room when he seemed to remember something. "Oh, by the way," he said, "I picked this up in town yesterday; if it's of any use you're more than welcome. Not that you need it, old chap—but Merry Christmas!" And he handed the old man the sort of shooting stick one sees in dreams.

EVERY morning, whatever the weather, Old Herbaceous would wander across to the lower greenhouse, leaning on his wonderful shooting stick. He never moved without it. It seemed to be a symbol of everything he had achieved. It didn't hurt him any more to know that his garden was in other hands. Here, in the greenhouse, he was king of his own castle.

Sometimes the new head gardener would drop in for a bit of advice. Or, on very cold mornings, when their *guv'nor* didn't happen to be around, the young fellows would slip in to warm their fingers at the stove. Even the Colonel would stop for a chat. . . . Altogether it was the happiest time Old Herbaceous had ever known. They still smiled at him behind his back, but only as you might smile at the lines of some famous old battleship.

About the middle of April Old Herbaceous appeared up at the house with the early strawberries that were to make Mrs. Widford's eyes pop out of her head. That lady, duly warned by her husband, rose nobly to the occasion, and the old man was made to

feel that any kindness he might have received had now been repaid a thousandfold. Once again he explained how important it was not to bring the plants into the greenhouse until the worst of the winter was over; how his late mistress had always looked for her early strawberries, and how he had promised to let her have some if the Colonel and his lady were agreeable. After he had gone Colonel Widford and his wife exchanged glances. They were a happy couple who thought the same nice things at the same time. . . .

"How far is it to Torquay?" asked Mrs. Widford.

"Round about a hundred," replied her husband. "Not more than five hours' running time, there and back. We could start at ten, lunch, and have the old boy back in time for supper. Y'know, Eileen, you *do* get rather nice ideas sometimes. . . ."

"Oh, no, you don't," laughed Mrs. Widford. "If it kills him, you're to blame."

At ten the next morning, packed up with all the rugs and cushions in the world, Mr. Pinnegar sat, like a lord, in the back seat of the Rolls-Royce. In his lap was a basket of early strawberries and, by his side, his beloved shooting stick. Mrs. Widford, sitting next to her husband, turned and smiled at their passenger. "Comfortable?" she asked; and the old man, finding no words to fit such a situation, gave a little sigh of satisfaction.

The big car slid quietly down the drive, turned into the main road and headed for the west. For the first thirty miles Old Herbaceous tried hard to believe that this wonderful thing had any basis in fact. Then he gave up the attempt and went to sleep. When he woke, they had stopped outside a pleasant little hotel on the sea front and Colonel Widford was speaking to the hall porter.

"Mr. Pinnegar," said the Colonel, "has called to see Mrs. Charteris. I rang up last night to say he was coming. We shall call for him during the afternoon. If he has finished before we're back, let him have a look round the garden—he'll tell you what's wrong with it. . . . Good-bye, old chap. See you later."

In the hotel the old man was handed over to a nice comfortable person. "Now, Mr. Pinnegar," she warned him, "you mustn't feel hurt if Mrs. Charteris doesn't seem to know you. Actually, she remembers you very well. She often talks of you, but you know how it is with very old people. Don't let her talk too much, and you mustn't stay long. I'll come in and tell you when it's time to go."

The door was opened quietly and Mr. Pinnegar stepped into a beautiful room with wide windows looking over the sea. His old mistress was sitting in a deep arm-chair, looking very much as when he had said good-bye to her in the garden.

"Good morning," said Mrs. Charteris. "I hear you want to see me. What can I do for you?"

Mr. Pinnegar produced his offering and placed it on the low table beside her.

"Strawberries—and so early!" exclaimed the old lady. "Of course, we used to have early strawberries at the Manor, but only because Pinnegar, my head gardener, was a very exceptional man. He started with me when he was quite a little boy, and he never left, although quite a lot of people offered him more than I could afford to pay. I think he was rather fond of me, in his funny way. He's quite old now, but when he was younger there was no one like him, and the garden was really a picture. Did you ever see my garden?"

Mr. Pinnegar replied that he had seen it—many times.

"I'm glad," she said. "I like to meet people who remember my garden. Of course, it wasn't my garden, really. I was only the owner. I said that to Pinnegar once, and the poor man was quite worried. He thought I was being cross with him about something, but I wasn't. You couldn't be cross with Pinnegar, he was such a dear. Always giving me little surprises. Like a little boy who saves up his pennies and buys something for you at Christmas."

Mr. Pinnegar, a listener hearing nothing but good of himself, was becoming more and more embarrassed, although there seemed

to be nothing he could do about it. But suppose Mrs. Charteris got to know she had been talking to him about himself, while he just sat there saying nothing. What would she think? Perhaps he ought to . . .

Then the door opened and the old lady turned eagerly to a new interest. "Oh, nurse," she said, "we've had such a nice talk about Pinnegar. When he came to me he was the funniest little boy. . . ."

"You were very fond of Pinnegar, weren't you?" said the nurse.

"Not always," replied the old lady. "Sometimes, when he was being difficult, I could have *smacked* him."

"Oh, dear," smiled the nurse. "I hope you never did."

"Of course not. That was only my fun. But he *was* a little trying. One minute he would *exasperate* you, because he *would* do things *his* way, and then he would be so sweet you almost wanted to cry."

"How very odd."

"Odd? Not at all," said Mrs. Charteris. "Pinnegar was a gardener . . . a gardener . . . and gardeners are all a little like that."



Reginald Arkell



REGINALD ARKELL divides his interests neatly between the classic arts of country **life** and the bright **lights** of the London theatres; between poetry, essays, song writing and journalism. In his London aspect, he is the author of librettos and lyrics for no less than seventeen musical shows. In his country aspect, he has written half a dozen books of verse and prose, including *Green Fingers* and *A Cottage in the Country*.

Married and the father of one son, Mr. Arkell spends much of his time at a country place near a town "Old Herbaceous" himself would have loved—Marston Meysey, Swindon, Wiltshire. Aside from the good earth, his main recreational interest is bridge, amusingly reflected in his *Bridge Without Sighs*. He has founded and edited a number of magazines, including *Men Only*.

OPERATION
CICERO

OPERATION CICERO

A condensation of the book by
L. C. MOYZISCH

Translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon and Heinrich Praenkel



"Operation Cicero" is published by Allan Wingate, London

Operation Cicero has been acclaimed as the most amazing true spy story of World War II. During the tense final phase of the war in Europe, the German Embassy in neutral Turkey paid a fortune for quantities of stolen Most Secret British documents—documents which revealed top-level Allied war plans to the enemy only a few days after they had been made.

L. C. Moyzisch, author of *Operation Cicero*, was the sole German contact with the mysterious Albanian under-cover agent who obtained this startling information.

Upon publication of this book in England, alarmed Members of the House of Commons questioned the authenticity of so incredible an achievement in enemy espionage. The Foreign Secretary ruefully confirmed the record.

“Agonizingly exciting . . . the story is a perfect dream of espionage . . . the suspense grows steadily until it is almost unendurable—one of the best spy stories ever written.”

—*The Spectator*

“One of the most extraordinary spy stories of the war.”

—*Weekly Scotsman*

CHAPTER 1

THE 'CICERO AFFAIR', or Operation Cicero, as we came to call it, was played out in Turkey, during the period between October 1943 and April 1944. It was perhaps the most spectacular single incident in that shadowy, secret, silent warfare that went on day and night for six long years; the struggle of brains to discover the enemy's intentions and thus to be in a position to frustrate them.

Cicero was a spy and, therefore, this is in essence a spy story; yet the ramifications of Operation Cicero were so vast, and its details so fantastic, that it far transcends the normal secret service thriller. I never knew Cicero's real name, though he was responsible for the most hectic six months of my existence, a period during which, at times, I was nearly out of my mind with anxiety and which, at the end, almost cost me my life.

When Operation Cicero began, the war was reaching its huge and noisy climax. The Allies had landed in Italy. The Russians, who, a year before, had seemed to be facing disaster with German troops approaching Stalingrad and pouring into the Crimea, were now advancing. The air attacks on Germany proper were daily and visibly gathering weight. In the hour-glass of history the sand marking the life-span of the Third Reich was fast running out. The German leaders refused to recognize it, even though Operation Cicero gave them quite precise knowledge of the enemy's power and intentions, knowledge such as no previous war leaders had probably ever received through secret service channels.

From the vantage point of Ankara the general picture of the war could perhaps be more clearly seen than from any other position. For Turkey occupied a unique position, politically almost equidistant from Germany, Russia and the Western Powers. As an attaché at the German Embassy in Ankara, I was naturally at the centre of the ceaseless intrigues of wartime diplomacy, while my

duties frequently took me to Istanbul—noisy, sweltering Istanbul—which at the time was the most important neutral city in the world.

The Embassy at Ankara was undoubtedly Germany's best window on the outside world, and the position of Ambassador there the most vital that the diplomatic service had to offer. Proof of this is provided by the fact that this appointment was held by Franz von Papen, a former chancellor of Germany and as subtle a politician as his country produced during the first half of the twentieth century.

Much of the perennial trouble, which it was von Papen's thankless task to smooth out, was due to the fact that there were so many "supreme chiefs" in Berlin, each intent on controlling German foreign policy.

Our official authority was, of course, the German Foreign Office headed by von Ribbentrop. But there were a great many other personalities and more or less official organizations active in matters of foreign policy.

In the first place there was the secret service of the Foreign Office itself. Then there was the huge secret service organization called the *Nachrichtendienst* (literally, Information Service), at this time being run by the very powerful SS General Kaltenbrunner, a notorious character subsequently condemned to death at Nuremberg. Next there was the *Abwehr*, the Military Intelligence Division of the German High Command. There was also Himmler's private secret service, which was finally incorporated in Kaltenbrunner's organization. Goebbels, too, through the Ministry of Propaganda, had his own secret service people and was apt to prove very jealous if any of the other organizations poached on what he regarded as his private preserve.

It was Dr. Goebbels' Ministry that on one occasion caused us one of the most severe headaches we had to suffer as a result of the manifold activities of these unofficial makers of foreign policy.

One day, purely by chance, I was browsing around the German

bookshop in Istanbul. As I glanced through a pile of books newly arrived from Germany, I was amazed to see a small volume entitled, *Türkisches Soldaten-Wörterbuch für den Feldgebrauch*, which might be translated as "A Soldier's Guide to Turkey." It was a phrase book, containing such sentences as a German soldier might need while on active service in Turkey. It was an official booklet, one of a series. Books with almost identical phrases had been issued to German troops before the invasion of Norway, Holland, France, Yugoslavia and the other occupied countries.

My amazement soon turned to horror when I realized the implications of this book being on sale in Istanbul and the diplomatic crisis that was likely to ensue. I was even more apprehensive when the shop-owner told me that out of his stock of one hundred copies, received from Berlin a day or two before, seven had already been sold.

I immediately bought the remaining ninety-three and took the night train back to Ankara, where I at once informed the Ambassador. Herr von Papen was furious and he, too, realized the implications of seven copies still being at large in Turkey.

We did not have to wait long for the expected reaction. At least one of the copies had reached the Turkish Foreign Minister. A most unpleasant interview between the Minister and the German Ambassador was the result. Herr von Papen's position was not made any easier by the fact that a week or two earlier he had delivered to the Head of the Turkish State a handwritten letter from Hitler, in which the latter professed eternal friendship and the keenest desire to spare Turkey the horrors of war.

On a visit to Berlin soon afterwards I found that this was a typical example of the way Dr. Goebbels played his own game. It seemed that he did not approve of the policy of friendship with Turkey, which was advocated by the German Ambassador and temporarily endorsed by the Führer. So he hit upon the plan of having this book produced and dispatched to Istanbul and many other Turkish towns, though *not* to Ankara. He evidently hoped

that a few copies would thus find their way into Turkish government circles before our Embassy heard of the book and that Turko-German relations would deteriorate in consequence.

That was the sort of background against which von Papen had to work. It required all his abilities and it was fortunate for us that he enjoyed the respect and confidence of the Turkish Government and that they realized he had always used all his influence to prevent a German invasion of Turkey—at one time a very real danger.

It was common knowledge in diplomatic circles that the relationship between von Papen and Ribbentrop was anything but friendly. Time and again von Papen incurred the wrath of his chief and the Führer; his suggestions that the war might possibly be ended by negotiation they found particularly unpalatable.

On one occasion I happened to be at the Foreign Ministry in Berlin when von Papen had an unusually severe altercation with Ribbentrop. Von Papen ended it with these words: "There is only one other thing I wish to say, *Herr Reichsaussenminister*. It is very easy to start a war; it is infinitely more difficult to finish one. If you persist in your present attitude, you, sir, will never succeed in doing so. Good day."

The strain between the Ambassador and his Foreign Minister was not confined to verbal exchanges. Von Papen was actually spied on by agents of the intelligence services mentioned above. A particularly ludicrous example of this came to my attention when I was on a visit to Berlin, shortly before the start of Operation Cicero, in September 1943.

Through an intimate friend of mine in the German capital I had access to confidential reports about Turkey, most of which seemed to be written outside Turkey with a minimum of expert knowledge and a maximum of malevolent imagination. Safe behind the locked door of my friend's office, I was amusing myself by glancing through a file of these "highly confidential" reports. One of them quoted some "first hand information from a thoroughly reliable source" about a meeting, which on a given day and at a

specific place von Papen had had with the American and Russian Ambassadors. This highly secret rendezvous between enemy ambassadors was supposed to have taken place when all three were allegedly out shooting near Ankara. According to the "thoroughly reliable source," von Papen was accompanied by one of his attachés, who happened to be me. The report then went into considerable detail concerning the treasonable conversation that the three ambassadors had held.

When I read this amazing piece of fiction I was baffled. Then suddenly it all came back to me. We *had* gone shooting, and the meeting with the two enemy ambassadors had taken place. But the details were rather different from those in the report.

One day my chief had kindly invited my wife and me to accompany him on a duck shoot. Now shooting ducks near Ankara is not easy. On a lake near the city there are ducks in huge numbers, but the surrounding countryside is completely flat and open, with neither tree nor bush to provide cover. The ducks fly away long before one is within shotgun range and so some way has to be found to deceive the birds.

Herr von Papen had thought out a very effective ruse. From the Ankara zoo he had borrowed a number of tame ducks. These we took with us in the car, each one trussed and fitted with a long piece of string. When we reached the lake, from which the wild ducks had flown off as usual, we threw the ducks we had brought with us into the water. They could then swim out as far as the strings allowed. Von Papen imagined they would act as a decoy for the wild ones. Meanwhile, on the shore we dug a shallow hide where the Ambassador, gun in hand, concealed himself, and I camouflaged him as best I could with branches and brambles that we had brought with us.

During the first few minutes nothing happened at all. Then, all of a sudden, two shots rang out in quick succession, echoing across the Anatolian plain. But they did not come from von Papen's hide. I saw him crawl out, covered with branches and brambles and

gesticulating furiously. He had turned his back on the lake and the ducks and was shouting enragedly at two men who were standing some way off on a small hillock. They were obviously out shooting, too. After a moment, they disappeared. The Ambassador told me, with extreme annoyance, what had happened.

"I'd hardly settled myself in the hide," he said, "when I heard a couple of shots behind me and was surrounded by a hail of pellets. As I jumped up I saw the two idiots silhouetted against the sun. I gave them a piece of my mind in every language I can lay my tongue to. Blasted poachers! Shooting at sitting birds! And they nearly got me, too, damn them! Just look at the mess."

The four ducks we had borrowed from the Ankara zoo were dead. Von Papen himself was bleeding freely behind one ear. "Would you recognize those damned poachers?" he asked me. "They passed close to you as they ran away. We should give their description to the police."

"I recognized them perfectly, sir. They happened to be your colleagues Mr. Steinhardt and Gospodin Vinogradov—the American and Russian Ambassadors."

At no time did I see the Ambassador so embarrassed as at that moment when he learned that he had called the American and Russian Ambassadors poachers—and that was the mildest of the epithets he had used. He had completely forgotten his own injuries. Even so, he could not quite get over his horror at the shooting of sitting ducks.

For a day or so after this incident he was extremely worried about his inadvertent rudeness to his diplomatic colleagues; the fact that we were at war and that they were on the enemy side made it all somehow worse. Finally, with true diplomatic finesse, the Ambassador solved his problem by calling personally on the Swedish and Swiss Legations, taking the ministers into his confidence and asking them to seek a suitable opportunity for expressing his regret about the unseemly language he had used.

The fact remains that in the middle of the Second World War

the German Ambassador in Turkey was very nearly bagged by his enemy colleagues, along with four tame ducks from the Ankara zoo.

Such was the basis for the report of von Papen's treasonable conversation while out duck shooting. Comical though it might be, the fact that such reports were written and, presumably, taken seriously in certain circles in Berlin, did not make his position any easier.

Apart from the Ambassador the most important German diplomat in Ankara—and the only other one to be directly involved in the Cicero business—was Jenke, the First Secretary. He had a charming though ambitious wife, who incidentally was Ribbentrop's sister. Their presence in Ankara was perhaps not entirely fortuitous.

On the British side von Papen's opposite number was Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, the British Ambassador. A most distinguished man, he was highly thought of by our Turkish hosts, and there can be no doubt that he must have been one of the most able and conscientious ambassadors of the time. It was to be my lot to scrutinize most thoroughly innumerable documents from the files of the British Embassy. Many of these, headed "Most Secret," were annotated with marginal comments in Sir Hughe's own hand. I remember how von Papen, Jenke and I—nobody else on our side in Ankara ever managed to see this secret material—more than once expressed our admiration for the high professional standard of Sir Hughe's personal reports; a most expressive style, devoid of all superfluities.

CHAPTER 2

THOSE autumn days of 1943 in Ankara were strangely beautiful. The summer had been even hotter than usual, but by October the temperature was perfect and the daily sunshine gave us as much pleasure as the incredibly blue sky stretching over the great

expanse of the Anatolian plain. It seemed a very peaceful world, almost ironically so.

The 26th of October was at first no different from any other day. I dealt with various routine matters. I left the office early and, as I drove home, I certainly had no suspicion that before this day was over my whole life would have been changed.

I had decided to go to bed early. I read for a while but soon switched off the light and was fast asleep when the telephone rang. It was Frau Jenke, the wife of the First Secretary. There was a note of anxiety and urgency in her voice.

"Would you please come round to our flat at once? My husband wants to see you."

I said that I was already in bed and asked what it was all about, but Frau Jenke cut me short.

"It's urgent. Please come immediately."

My wife had waked up, too, and as I dressed we wondered what sort of a fool's errand this would turn out to be. It was probably some ridiculous signal from Berlin. That sort of thing had happened before. When I left the house I glanced at my watch. It was half past ten.

A few minutes' drive took me to the Embassy which, on account of its German style and also because it contained several buildings, was called by the Turks *Alman Koy*, the German village. The sleepy Turkish porter opened the big iron gate. A short walk brought me to where the Jenkes lived, and I rang the bell. Frau Jenke opened the door herself, apologizing in a few words for having disturbed my sleep.

"My husband's gone to bed, but he would like to see you first thing in the morning." Then she pointed to the door of the drawing-room. "There's a strange sort of character in there. He has something he wants to sell us. You're to talk to him and find out what it's all about. I've sent the servants to bed."

I went into the drawing-room. The heavy curtains were

drawn and the only light came from two table lamps. In a deep arm-chair next to one of the lamps a man was seated in such a way that his face was in shadow. He sat so still he might have been sleeping. But he was not. He got up and addressed me in French.

"Who are you?" he asked, with what seemed to me to be an anxious expression.

I told him that Jenke had instructed me to talk to him. He nodded and, judging by his expression, now fully visible, seemed much relieved.

I guessed that he was in his early fifties. He had thick black hair, brushed straight back from his forehead, which was fairly high. His dark eyes kept darting nervously from me to the door and back again. His chin was firm, his nose small and shapeless. Not an attractive face on the whole. Later, after I'd seen a great deal of him, it occurred to me to compare his face to that of a clown without his make-up on—the face of a man accustomed to disguising his true feelings.

There was a moment's silence while we eyed one another. I sat down and motioned him to do the same. Instead, he tiptoed to the door, jerked it open, shut it silently again, and came back with evident relief to resume his seat in the arm-chair.

Haltingly at first, and in his poor French, he began to speak: "I have an offer to make you, a proposition for the Germans. I ask your word that whether you accept it or not you won't ever mention it to anyone except your chief. Any indiscretion on your part would make your life as worthless as mine. I'd see to that if it was the last thing I did."

As he said this he made an unpleasant but unmistakable gesture, passing his hand across his throat.

"Do you give me your word?"

"Of course I do. If I didn't know how to keep a secret I wouldn't be here now. Please be so good as to tell me what it is you want."



I made a show of looking at my wrist-watch. He reacted at once.

"You'll have plenty of time for me once you know why I'm here. My proposition is of the utmost importance to your government. I am . . ." He hesitated, and I wondered if it was due to his difficulty in expressing himself in French or whether he wished to test my reaction. ". . . I can give you extremely secret papers, the most secret that exist."

He paused again for a moment, and then added:

"They come straight from the British Embassy. Well? That would interest you, wouldn't it?"

I did my best to keep my poker face. My first thought was that he was a petty crook out for some easy money. I would have to be careful. He seemed to have guessed what I was thinking for he said, "But I'll want money for them, a lot of money. My work, you know, is dangerous, and if I were caught . . ." He repeated the unpleasant gesture with his hand across his throat.

"You've got funds for that sort of thing, haven't you? Your government would provide it. I want twenty thousand pounds, English pounds sterling."

"Nonsense," I said. "Quite out of the question. It would have to be something extraordinarily important to be worth anything near that price. Besides, first I'd have to see these papers of yours. Have you got them with you?"

He leaned back so that his face was out of the light again. My eyes by now were accustomed to the dimness and I could see his expression. There was a superior smile on his unattractive face. I was not quite sure what to say. After all, I knew absolutely nothing about the fellow. I said nothing, and he soon began to speak again.

"I'm not a fool. I've spent years preparing for this day. I've worked out all the details. Now the time has come to act. I'll tell you my terms. If you agree, very well. If you don't . . ."

He leaned forward, out into the full glare of the lamp, and with

the thumb of his left hand pointed in the direction of the heavily curtained window.

"... if you don't, then I'll see if they'd like to have my documents over there."

His thumb was pointing in the direction of the Soviet Embassy. There was a moment's silence and then he added, hissing the words: "You see, I hate the British."

I offered him a cigarette, which he accepted gratefully, taking a few deep pulls and then stubbing it out. He rose and went to the door once again to make sure that there was no one listening. Then he turned back and planted himself squarely in front of me. I got up, too.

"You'd like to know who I am, wouldn't you? My name is quite unimportant. I'll give you three days to consider my proposition. On the 30th of October, at three in the afternoon, I'll telephone you at your office and ask you if you've received a letter for me. I'll call myself Pierre. If you say no, you'll never see me again. If you say yes, it'll mean that you've accepted my offer. In that case, I'll come to see you again at ten o'clock on the evening of the same day. Not here, though. We'll have to arrange some other meeting-place. You'll then receive from me two rolls of film, containing photographs of British secret documents. I'll receive from you the sum of twenty thousand pounds in bank-notes. You'll be risking twenty thousand pounds, but I'll have risked my life. Should you approve of my first delivery you can have more. For each subsequent roll of film I'll want fifteen thousand pounds. Well?"

I was inclined to think that the offer might be genuine, but I was convinced that, in view of the exorbitant price he was asking, nothing could come of it, particularly since he seemed to expect us to buy the papers sight unseen. I made a mental note to stress the inordinate risk in the memo that I would have to write about all this. I was certain the offer would be turned down.

Nevertheless, we agreed that he should telephone me at my

office on the 30th day of October at three o'clock. We also agreed that in the event of his offer being accepted we would meet near the tool-shed at the end of the Embassy garden.

After these details had been arranged he asked me to switch out all the lights in the hall and on the stairs. He wished to leave the house in complete darkness. I complied with his request. When I came back to the drawing-room he had put on his overcoat and his hat, which was pulled down low over his eyes. It was past midnight by now.

I stood at the door to let him pass. He suddenly gripped my arm and whispered in my ear: "You'd like to know who I am? I'm the British Ambassador's valet."

THE NEXT MORNING I had a slight headache and that dry feeling that comes after a sleepless night. By daylight I was inclined to revert to my original impression that the man was nothing but a trickster seeking to put one over on the gullible Germans.

After a long soak in my tub and some strong coffee I began to feel better. I told myself there was really no need for me to worry about it at all. I wouldn't have to make any decision—that was a matter for the Ambassador or, more probably, for Berlin. My job was merely to report what had taken place.

I reached my office very early that morning. My secretary had not yet arrived and I was glad of the opportunity to draft my memo for the Ambassador completely undisturbed.

As I signed it I began to wonder why the mysterious visitor, who claimed to be the British Ambassador's valet, had gone to Jenke. But I did not have to wait long to discover the reason, which was to go a long way towards dispersing my doubts about the genuineness of the man's offer. While I waited for the Ambassador to arrive, Herr Jenke telephoned and asked me to come over. Unlike me, both Herr and Frau Jenke had passed 'a very good night. I could see that Jenke was consumed with curiosity about the events of the night before.

"That strange sort of character of yours," I said, "he had a most remarkable offer to make."

"I know," Jenke interrupted. "I had a few words with him before you arrived. I thought you were the best man to deal with him. In my position I have to be careful about getting involved in anything of that sort."

I said to Jenke, "So you met the man. Why do you think he picked on you?"

"I've met the man all right, and he knows me, too," said Jenke. "Some six or seven years ago, before I joined the diplomatic service, he worked for a while in our house. I haven't seen him since. I can't remember his name, but I did recognize his face when he came here last night. I suppose he wants money?"

"He most certainly does," I said. "To be exact he wants twenty thousand pounds sterling."

"What!" Herr and Frau Jenke exclaimed together. "Twenty thousand pounds!"

I nodded, but before I could tell them more the telephone rang. I had asked for an appointment with the Ambassador as soon as he came in. He would see me now. Jenke came along, too.

We entered Herr von Papen's office together. It was a large room on the first floor, simply and tastefully furnished, with fine pictures on the walls. Behind his big desk sat the Ambassador, grey haired but still very handsome. He gazed at me with his striking blue eyes.

"Well, gentlemen, what have you been up to?"

"Last night," I said, "in Herr Jenke's house, I had a most remarkable conversation. With the British Ambassador's valet."

"With whom?" asked Herr von Papen.

I repeated what I had said and handed him my memo. He put on his spectacles and, as he read, glanced at me once or twice over the top of them. When he had finished reading he pushed the

paper to the far side of his desk, as if he wanted instinctively to have nothing to do with its contents. He got up, went to the window, opened it, and still without a word stood staring out over the open country to the line of mountains rising blue in the far distance. At last he turned towards us.

"What sort of valets do we employ in our Embassy?"

I looked at the Ambassador and then at Herr Jenke. No one said anything.

"What are we to do, sir?" I asked finally.

"I don't know. In any case the sum mentioned is far too large for us to be in a position to decide the matter here. Draft a signal for Berlin and bring it to me personally. I'll have another word with you then."

I went to my office, leaving Jenke with the Ambassador. When I came back half an hour later, Herr von Papen was alone. I held the draft of the signal in my hand.

"You realize what might be behind all this?" the Ambassador asked.

"Well, sir, I suppose it might be a trap. They could let us have some documents, even genuine ones, and then bluff us later on with a bogus one. Even at best, if the man is genuine and it's not a British trap, we'd be involved in a most unpleasant scandal if the story ever came out."

"What impression did the man make on you personally?" von Papen asked.

"Not a particularly good one, sir, though by the end of the conversation I was inclined to believe his tale. He struck me as unscrupulous enough, and his hatred of the British, unless it's put on, would be an additional motive, quite apart from his obvious desire for money. On the whole he didn't strike me as an ordinary crook. Of course, all this is mere conjecture on my part."

"What do you think the British would do if one of our people made them a comparable offer?"

"I think they'd undoubtedly accept it, sir. In time of war no

nation could afford to turn down such a proposition."

The Ambassador reached for my draft signal and read it carefully. Then he took his green pencil and signed it. The piece of paper had now become an official document. He pushed it over to me. "Read it to me again," he said.

I did so:

TO THE REICH FOREIGN MINISTER, PERSONAL
MOST SECRET

WE HAVE OFFER OF BRITISH EMBASSY EMPLOYEE ALLEGED TO BE
BRITISH AMBASSADOR'S VALET TO PROCURE PHOTOGRAPHS OF TOP
SECRET ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS. FOR FIRST DELIVERY ON OCTOBER
30TH TWENTY THOUSAND POUNDS STERLING IN BANK-NOTES ARE
DEMANDED. FIFTEEN THOUSAND POUNDS FOR ANY FURTHER ROLL OF
FILMS. PLEASE ADVISE WHETHER OFFER CAN BE ACCEPTED. IF SO
SUM REQUIRED MUST BE DISPATCHED BY SPECIAL COURIER TO ARRIVE
HERE NOT LATER THAN OCTOBER 30TH. ALLEGED VALET WAS EM-
PLOYED SEVERAL YEARS AGO BY FIRST SECRETARY OTHERWISE
NOTHING MUCH KNOWN HERE. PAPEN.

This signal was coded at once and dispatched by wireless before noon on October 27th. It was on Ribbentrop's desk within the hour.

Nothing happened on October 27th or 28th and by the evening of that day I was convinced that the Foreign Minister, if he deigned to answer at all, would decide in the negative. It had happened more than once that the Ambassador's suggestions had been turned down merely because they came from him.

The 28th of October was the eve of a great Turkish national festival and that night all Ankara was floodlit. On the 29th I had almost forgotten about the answer that we were still awaiting from Berlin. In the early afternoon there was a military parade on the race-course. When I returned to the Embassy after the parade, I found a message that the Ambassador wished to see me at once. I went to his office where, without a word, he handed me a decoded signal. I read:

TO AMBASSADOR VON PAPEN, PERSONAL

MOST SECRET

BRITISH VALET'S OFFER TO BE ACCEPTED TAKING EVERY PRECAUTION. SPECIAL COURIER ARRIVING ANKARA 30TH BEFORE NOON. EXPECT IMMEDIATE REPORT AFTER DELIVERY OF DOCUMENTS. RIBBENTROP.

The matter had been decided for us.

On October 30th, at 3 p.m. sharp, the telephone rang in my office. I think my heart skipped a beat as I snatched for the receiver. The voice at the other end sounded faint and far away.

"Pierre here. *Bonjour, monsieur*. Have you got my letter?"

"Yes."

"I'll see you tonight. *Au revoir!*"

I asked to see the Ambassador. After a minute or two Fräulein Rose, his secretary, rang through to say he was awaiting me.

"The valet's telephoned, sir. I'm meeting him at ten tonight."

"Take care, my boy, not to let him fool you. Between you and me I don't care for this business at all. Above all we can't afford any scandal here. You have my instructions to go ahead, of course. But you must realize that if anything should go wrong, I'm afraid I shan't be able to protect you, and in fact I'd probably have to disclaim all knowledge of what you were doing. Let me warn you to be particularly careful about not mentioning this to anyone, *anyone*."

"I've thought a great deal about it, sir," I said, "including the actual manner of handing over the money. I won't give it to him before I've had a chance of making sure that the stuff's genuine. Frankly, sir, I don't care for this sort of thing any more than you do. But I'm sure we'd have been wrong if we'd turned the offer down. Besides, it's not as though we were dipping into the British safe. The stuff's being brought to us. Anyway, it may still turn out to be a trick."

"Perhaps," said the Ambassador. "Frankly, I'm not quite sure whether I'd be altogether sorry if it were. Anyway, here's the money. You'd better count it."

Herr von Papen pulled out of his middle drawer an enormous bundle of bank-notes, which he pushed across the desk to me. So the Berlin courier had arrived in time. I was astonished by that mass of bank-notes, consisting as it did entirely of ten-, twenty- and fifty-pound notes, wrapped up in bundles. Could they not have found some of larger denomination in Berlin? To carry all this paper one would have to cram one's pockets to bursting point. Only a small proportion of them seemed ever to have been in circulation.

The Ambassador seemed to have guessed my thoughts. "Look altogether too new, these notes."

I shrugged my shoulders and began to count. It was twenty thousand all right. I wrapped the whole lot up in the large front page of a newspaper which was lying on the Ambassador's desk. As I was leaving, Herr von Papen accompanied me as far as the door.

"Remember, don't get me into trouble—or yourself, either."

Hugging my expensive parcel I went downstairs and across the Embassy gardens to my office. There I locked up the money in my safe.

Later that afternoon I sent for my secretary. Her real name—she is now happily married somewhere in Germany—is beside the point. She was Schnürchen to everybody in the Embassy, because her favourite expression was that everything in the office must *am Schnürchen gehen* which is the German equivalent for everything being under control, and in apple-pie order. Efficient, tidy, reliable and loyal—she was the perfect secretary. I knew I would have to hurt her feelings, but I had no choice in the matter. I didn't intend to take even the shadow of a risk.

"By the way, would you mind letting me have the other key to the safe? I'll take care of it from now on."

She gave me an astonished look. I could see that she resented this.

As a matter of fact Schnürchen got the key back a week later,

and after that she kept it. For technical reasons this was unavoidable. Nor did she ever, at any time or in any way, betray the great trust I placed in her.

At ten minutes to ten that evening I was back in the Embassy. I drew the curtains in my office and put out the lights in the hall, so that there was no chance of my visitor being seen from outside.

In the Embassy cellar, where we had our dark-room, the photographer was ready. The man was an entirely trustworthy code clerk who in civilian life had been a professional photographer. If the valet really brought a roll of film it was to be developed at once. As it happens, I am myself an amateur photographer, but I knew little about developing. That is why in the early stages of Operation Cicero I could not avoid employing the professional, but I think I managed to keep him from knowing what it was all about.

At two minutes to ten I was standing at the end of the Embassy garden at the appointed meeting-place near the tool-shed. It was a dark night, and it seemed to me very suitable for the purpose in hand.

It was rather cold and absolutely still. I could almost hear the beating of my own heart. I had hardly waited a minute before I saw a person approaching me. My eyes tried to pierce the darkness. Then I heard his voice, speaking softly:

"It's me, Pierre. *Tout va bien?*"

CHAPTER 3

WE WALKED together from the tool-shed to the Embassy in silence, and across the darkened hall into my room. When I switched on the light we were both, for the moment, dazzled by the glare.

He showed no trace of nervousness now, as he had done at our

first meeting a few days before. He was apparently in the best of spirits and full of confidence.

He spoke first: "Have you the money?" I nodded.

He reached into his overcoat pocket and took out two rolls which I could see at a glance were 36 mm. films. They lay in his open hand, but he withdrew it when I reached for them.

"First, the money," he said calmly.

I went to my safe and opened it. I recall that I had a little trouble with the combination. My back was turned to him, and this added to my discomfort. When at last I had got the safe open and had reached in for the bundle, my hands were trembling.

I turned round. He stood in the same spot, his eyes fixed on the newspaper package I held, an expression of mingled curiosity and greed on his face.

I unwrapped the bank-notes as I walked over to my desk. There I counted them, aloud and very slowly. Coming a little closer he counted them with me, for I could see his lips moving when I glanced up at him.

"Fifteen thousand . . . two-fifty . . . five hundred . . . seven-fifty . . . sixteen thousand . . ."

When I had finished I re-wrapped the whole lot in the sheet of newspaper. This was the critical moment. I had to remain firm now in my decision not to pay him the money before I had made sure what it was I was buying.

"Give me the films," I said, putting my left hand on the money and holding out my right. He gave me both rolls, at the same time reaching out towards the bundle of notes.

"Not yet," I said. "You can have it as soon as I know what the films are like. You'll have to wait here for about a quarter of an hour while I develop them. Everything's ready. The money's all here; you've seen it and counted it yourself. If you won't agree to this you can have your film back at once. Well?"

"You're very suspicious. You should have more trust in me. But all right. I'll wait here."

I felt extremely relieved. Apparently it wasn't a trick after all. For the first time I felt that maybe the whole business would turn out all right. The sight of the money and my deliberately slow counting of it had had the effect I intended. He saw himself already in possession of a fortune and he was not going to risk it all by being stubborn.

He stood there quite calmly while I locked the money back in the safe. He seemed to have considerably more confidence in me than I had in him.

I had fully recovered my composure by this time. "Cigarette?" I held out my case and he helped himself to several.

"They'll last me till you get back," he said coolly.

He sat down and began to smoke. I locked the door from the outside. The valet must have heard the key turn but, somewhat to my surprise, he made no protest at being locked in like a prisoner.

The photographer had made all the necessary preparations. In the dark-room the developer was ready and brought to the correct temperature. He put both the films into the developing tanks. I asked him to explain all his actions to me in detail, because in future I intended to do all this myself. Some ten minutes later the first tank was opened. I took out the spool and put it in the rinsing bath and immediately afterwards into the fixing bath. The second film followed.

Again some minutes passed, very slowly. At last the photographer said, "The first one should be ready by now."

He held one end of the film up against the viewing box.

In spite of the small size of the negatives I could clearly see the typescript. The photographs on both rolls seemed to be technically perfect. Then the two precious strips were dipped into the washing tank. I stood there watching it all impatiently. Another few minutes and we would know what it was that we were buying at such a high price.

I pegged the wet films on to a line. Now the little room was brightly lit by a hundred-watt bulb. Taking a strong magnifying

glass I bent over the wet strip. I could read the writing quite clearly:

MOST SECRET

FROM FOREIGN OFFICE TO BRITISH EMBASSY, ANKARA

That, and the fact that the document bore a very recent date, was quite enough for me.

I hurried the photographer out, locked the door carefully, and asked him to meet me there again in about fifteen minutes' time. Then I went up to my office.

When I came in my visitor was still sitting exactly as I had left him. Only the full ash-tray indicated that he had been waiting for quite some time. He seemed neither impatient nor irritated. All he said was, "Well?"

Instead of answering I opened my safe, took out the bundle of notes, and handed it over to him. I also presented him with a previously prepared receipt for the amount of twenty thousand pounds sterling, but this he shoved aside with an arrogant gesture.

Then he stuffed the big bundle under his coat, which he had not taken off at any time. He pulled his hat down over his eyes and turned up the collar of his overcoat. In the darkness a close friend might have failed to recognize him.

Barely an hour before he had entered my office a simple domestic servant; he was leaving it a wealthy man. I can still hear the curiously sneering and triumphant tone of voice in which he spoke as he left me, clutching his precious package beneath his coat.

"*Au revoir, monsieur,*" he said. "Same time tomorrow."

When the photographer returned I managed, with his help, to make adequate enlargements of the films, which consisted of fifty-two negatives. Then I sent him off to bed. I was glad to be alone.

My emotions during the next few hours remain absolutely clear to me. Hour after hour, behind the locked door of my office, I read, sifted, made notes, read again. Gradually, as the night wore on, those secret documents threw a harsh light on much that, for me, had been confused and ill-understood.

Here, on my desk, were most carefully guarded secrets of the enemy, both political and military and of incalculable value. There was nothing suspect about these documents. These were no plant. Out of the blue there had dropped into our laps the sort of papers a secret service agent might dream about for a lifetime without believing that he could ever get hold of them. Even at a glance I could see that the valet's price had not been exorbitant.

None of these documents was older than a fortnight at most, and the majority bore a date of the last few days. They were all signals passed between the Foreign Office in London and the British Embassy in Ankara. All of them bore in the top left-hand corner the imprint: TOP SECRET OR MOST SECRET. Apart from the date they also showed the time at which they had been sent and received by the wireless operators. This was a technical point of great importance in helping the Berlin experts to break the British diplomatic cipher.

Of particular value for us were signals from the Foreign Office concerning relations and exchanges of opinion between London, Washington and Moscow. It was doubtless the extremely important position that Sir Hughe occupied, no less than the personal respect and confidence that he enjoyed in London, that led to his being so well-informed about political and military affairs. I had clear proof of this in the batch of glossy photographs on my desk.

For a German those documents had an important and upsetting message to reveal. They clearly showed the determination, as well as the ability, of the Allies utterly to destroy the Third Reich in the comparatively near future. As I sat hunched over my desk for hour after hour, I saw the writing on the wall. This was not propaganda. The grim future that lay ahead of us was there for all to see.

I remember wondering whether the leaders of Germany, far away in Berlin or at the Führer's headquarters, would grasp the full significance of what was here revealed. Finally, exhausted by emotion as much as by anything else, I fell asleep over my desk,

where my secretary's knock at the door next morning awakened me.

A few hours later I was sitting in the Ambassador's little ante-room, on a sofa. I was very tired and unshaven. Fräulein Rose, the Ambassador's secretary, was moving to and fro between the ante-room and the Ambassador's office. While awaiting his arrival she was laying out the morning papers and mail. She obviously disapproved of my dishevelled appearance.

In order to have something to do, I began to thumb through the fifty-two photographs in my folder. I held them in such a way that she could only see their backs.

"This must be important business for you to bother the chief so early in the morning. What have you got in that folder of yours?"

"Nothing for your chaste eyes, Rosie. Just some nudes—the bare facts, one might say."

"Now you're being coarse. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

I was no longer listening to what she said. From sheer boredom I had begun to count the precious photographs.

". . . Forty-seven . . . forty-eight . . . forty-nine . . . fifty . . . fifty-one."

Surely it must have been due to Rosie's chatter that I had miscounted them! I started all over again ". . . fifty-one."

In my office I had made sure that all fifty-two were there. As calmly as I could I counted them again. There were still only fifty-one.

"Fräulein Rose, would you mind helping me for a moment? Count them please, but don't turn them over."

She did so, while I stood and watched her. I was beginning to feel very frightened.

"Fifty-one," said Fräulein Rose.

It was appalling. Where could the other one be? Had I lost it? If so, it must have happened between my office and the Ambassador's.

I grabbed the folder of photographs, put it under my arm, tore open the door and ran downstairs. At the front door I almost crashed into the Ambassador, who was coming in. I did not stop or say a word. Herr von Papen looked at me as though he thought I had gone mad.

In the garden I examined every inch of the path I had taken. Nothing. I hurried into my office. My secretary was sitting calmly at her desk.

"Did I leave anything here? A photograph, for instance?"

"I haven't seen anything."

I searched through all my drawers, crept under the desk, lifted the carpet. Nothing. I must have dropped it on my way from my room to the Ambassador's ante-room. Suppose somebody had already picked it up. God help us all if it got into the wrong hands. With a heavy heart I made my way slowly towards the Ambassador's office.

Just before reaching the main gate I glanced around once more. Over there by the gate . . . I broke into a run.

It was the missing photograph all right, lying face down, showing nothing but its innocent white back. Quite a few people must have passed that spot during the last twenty minutes. And only a few yards away was the great Boulevard Atatürk with its constant stream of pedestrians. A little gust of wind, and our secret would have been revealed to the world.

I picked it up, trying to look as unconcerned as possible, for the porter was watching me. Back in my room I counted the prints all over again. This time there were fifty-two. Then I set off once more to see the Ambassador.

He received me with a smile. Evidently Fräulein Rose had told him all about the queer behaviour of his attaché.

"Now, what about this valet of yours? Did you get rid of the twenty thousand pounds? From what Fräulein Rose tells me I gather you received a fine selection of bathing beauties in exchange?"

The Ambassador was in a good mood this morning.

"I think, sir, you'll find my bathing beauties as exciting as I did." I handed him the folder. He took it and put on his spectacles.

"Fantastic," he murmured, almost at the first glance. I could see that he was excited. "Good heavens! Did you see this one?"

The Ambassador's voice jerked me awake just as my eyes were about to close. He handed me one of the documents that gave precise details concerning the gradual infiltration of R.A.F. personnel into Turkey. The figures were very considerable, far larger than anything we had suspected.

"This doesn't look too good," said Herr von Papen. "Berlin won't like this one."

The Ambassador then read a series of signals I had arranged in order early that morning, a breakdown of Lend Lease equipment recently supplied to the Soviets. The volume was fantastic. This would certainly cause consternation at the Führer's headquarters.

Another document was a most important signal, intended for the British Ambassador's eyes only, describing the state of relationships between London, Washington and Moscow. The Russians were insisting on an immediate second front, making it quite clear that they did not regard the Italian campaign as a sufficient contribution to Allied strategy. Moscow seemed to be not only impatient but suspicious about the true intentions of her allies. That little item would suit Ribbentrop's purposes very well, convinced as he was of the ultimate collapse of what he had once called "the unholy alliance."

Von Papen kept on reading. From time to time he would shake his head or, speaking more to himself than to me, would mutter, "Fantastic! Unbelievable!"

Having made his first superficial study of the papers, he leaned back in his arm-chair. He seemed deep in thought and made no immediate comment on what he had read.

"Well, sir, what do you think?" I ventured to ask.

"If these documents are genuine, and I have no reason to doubt that they are, their value is inestimable. But we must still bear in mind the possibility of its all being an extremely clever trap. It's a great mistake ever to underestimate the British. The man's next delivery should help us to make up our minds on that point. Incidentally, when are you seeing him again?"

"Tonight at ten o'clock."

"The man must be working overtime. Let's hope he's not being rash. Where are you meeting him?"

"By the tool-shed in the garden. He gets through the fence there and then I take him to my office."

"Who knows about this so far?"

"No one, sir, except you, Herr and Frau Jenke and myself."

"Your secretary?"

"No."

"Is she reliable?"

"Absolutely, sir."

He reached for the folder again and thumbed through the photographs. After a pause he said:

"I'm certainly going to tighten up our own security regulations and make everyone on the staff conscious of them. If the British can get into this sort of mess, so can we. And . . ."

He fell silent. Then, after a while, he added, "Well, I'll have to inform the Foreign Minister about this. But for purposes of correspondence the child must first be christened. We'll have to give the valet a code name. What shall we call him? Have you thought of a name?"

"What about Pierre?" I suggested. "That's what he calls himself on the telephone. I'm sure it's not his real name."

"No good, my boy. Very unimaginative. We've got to give him a code name that even he doesn't know. How about this? Since his documents are so very, very eloquent, let's call him Cicero."

CHAPTER 4

AFTER a few hours' sleep I awoke entirely rested and ready to get back to work. I had another talk with the Ambassador, at which Jenke was also present. Herr von Papen had devoted the greater part of his day to a close study of the documents. He was now entirely satisfied that they were genuine. The three of us discussed certain points of technical interest.

How, in the first place, could a valet obtain access to such secret documents?

Did he have an assistant? Was anyone else at the British Embassy in the know?

How exactly did he photograph the documents?

Did he himself select the ones worth reproducing? If so, how was it that some of the documents we had so far received were of extreme importance while others were relatively trivial?

Did he do the actual photographing inside or outside the British Embassy?

What, if any, were the man's motives, apart from his obvious desire for money? Why did he hate the British? And how had he come to enjoy the Ambassador's confidence?

Why did he insist on being paid in sterling, a currency relatively rare in Turkey and certainly far less popular than gold or dollars? When he decided to go in for this dangerous work, would it not be logical to assume that he was hoping for, or even expecting, a British defeat? In the nature of things this would involve a depreciation of British currency. Why then did he insist on sterling?

All these questions I noted down for future discussions with Cicero.

At exactly ten that night I went to the tool-shed in the garden. Pierre, or Cicero, was already there. He greeted me like an old friend. When we got to my office I locked the door. Cicero re-

peated the precautions he had gone through at Jenke's house, pushing the long curtains aside to make sure that there were no eavesdroppers. I let him do so without comment. He seemed to be in no hurry. I sat down at my desk. There was a chair for him opposite, which he finally took. There were cigarettes, and a decanter of whisky stood on a side table.

Cicero poured himself out a drink and then without a word placed two rolls of film on my desk. I took them and locked them in my drawer. I now had to explain to him that I had no more sterling at the moment, but that some was expected from Berlin in the very near future. I was a little anxious as to how he would take this, but he interrupted me after a few words: "*Ça ne fait rien*. You can give me the thirty thousand for these two rolls next time. I'll be back, you see. And I know that it'll be in your interests to keep me happy. Besides, I trust you."

It was gratifying to find that my word was worth thirty thousand pounds. I drank his health and he returned the compliment.

"I was quite astounded last night by the technical quality of your work," I said, assuming a light conversational manner. "Do you do it alone or have you an assistant? In either case you are obviously an expert photographer."

"I've been interested in photography for years. I have no one to help me. I do everything myself."

"Where do you do it? In the Embassy or somewhere else?"

"In the Embassy, naturally."

"But how exactly do you take the photographs? And when? I'm most interested."

"Isn't it enough if I deliver the goods?" he asked, suddenly becoming sulky. "Maybe I'll tell you about how I work some other time but not now."

There was clearly nothing more to be got out of him at the moment. When he was about to leave he asked me to get him a new camera.

"I've been working with a German Leica," he said. "I borrowed

it from a friend. I'll have to return it fairly soon. Get me another one. Just the normal sort. You'd better have it sent from Berlin. Someone might have a record of the numbers of the cameras for sale here in Ankara."

He seemed to think of everything. But what he had told me was not satisfactory so far as the precise technicalities of his work were concerned. Still, for the time being I had no choice but to believe him when he said he did it all alone and that no one else knew anything about it.

It was nearly midnight by the time he left.

"When shall I see you again?" I asked.

"I'll ring you up when I have some new stuff, but I shan't come to your office any more. It's too risky. We'll meet in the old part of the town in some dark street or other. You've got a car, I suppose?"

I nodded.

"We'd better arrange a meeting-place tonight. Somewhere you won't have to stop. Just drive along very slowly with your lights dimmed. As you reach the place, open the door of the car and I'll jump in. If there's anyone in sight ignore me, drive round the block and pick me up when the coast is clear. You'd better drive me to town now and we will fix on a place.

"There is just one other thing," he said. "In case your phone should be tapped—one never knows nowadays—I'll always name a date twenty-four hours later than the time I really mean. If I say I'm expecting you for bridge at such and such a time on the eighth it'll mean that I'll be waiting for you at that time on the seventh. I'd feel safer that way."

I went for the car while he waited in my office. It happened that my own old Mercedes was being repaired and I was temporarily using a car I had borrowed from a friend. It was a big new Opel, streamlined and in appearance very much like the numerous American cars used by the Diplomatic Corps. A few days later I bought this car, because it seemed particularly suitable for our pur-

poses. By day I continued to drive the old Mercedes, which everyone in Ankara knew to be mine.

When I brought the Opel round that night he sat in the back seat and carefully drew the side curtains. Then, after directing me through the dark streets of the old part of the city, he told me to stop at a point where there was a plot of waste land between two houses. It was near a crossroads and quite unmistakable. He had picked the place with considerable shrewdness. "This," he said, "will be our meeting-place for the time being. Now would you please drive me to the British Embassy?"

I thought I must have misunderstood him.

"Surely you don't want me to take you to the British Embassy of all places."

"Why not? That's where I live."

I could see, quite clearly silhouetted against the dark sky, the two big buildings of the British Embassy. It suddenly crossed my mind that this might be a trap. There was just one short straight stretch, then a sharp bend, and in a few seconds I would find myself opposite their main gate. Before I reached the corner I heard Cicero's voice behind me:

"Go slowly now, but don't stop."

I took my foot off the accelerator. We were now rounding the corner and I had to watch the road. I heard a soft click. The back door had been closed almost noiselessly. I looked around. There was no sign of Cicero.

At the German Embassy, everybody seemed to be asleep. I made my way downstairs to the dark-room with the two rolls of film in my hand. Early in the day I had bought a photography book and now mixed the developing and fixing solution according to its instructions. After an hour's work I had the two strips of film neatly pegged between an electric heater and a ventilator.

Again the photographs were technically perfect. Excited and curious, I took the magnifying glass and, holding the still wet film against the light, tried to get a glimpse of the night's secrets. I

could see very little. I would have to wait until they were dry.

Back in the dark-room at about three o'clock I settled down at once to the job of enlarging. At about six o'clock I had forty new enlargements of secret British documents on my desk. By about eight I was superficially acquainted with their contents.

I locked them in my safe and left the Embassy through the back door leading to the garden. After this second night out of bed all I wanted was sleep. I left instructions to be called at eleven o'clock. I felt completely refreshed after two and a half hours of sleep.

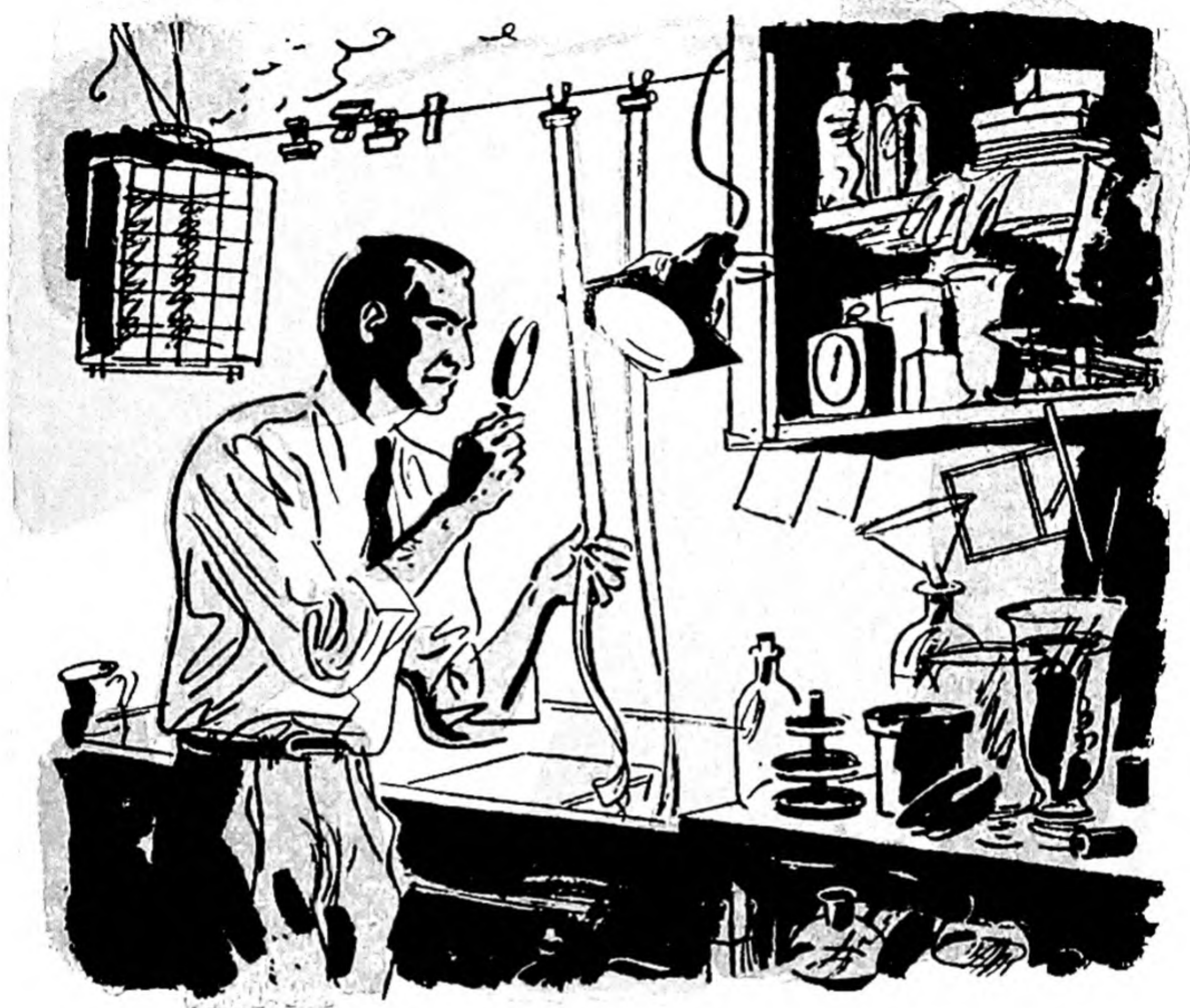
Just before twelve I entered the Ambassador's office. In my brief-case were the forty documents. Among them were the first minutes of the Moscow conference that Eden and Cordell Hull had attended. The matters discussed at this conference were so confidential that Winston Churchill would only reveal them to the House of Commons in secret session.

During the next two weeks much of my daily work consisted in drafting and encoding signals for the Ambassador to forward to Berlin. I was soon in a state of permanent exhaustion since, for reasons of security, I myself had to handle all the work connected with Operation Cicero that would normally have been done by the Embassy clerks.

Berlin added considerably to my troubles by sending me long lists of questions about Cicero to which they wanted full and immediate answers. The majority could only have been answered by a clairvoyant.

Above all they kept asking, over and over again, for precise information about Cicero's real name, his usual whereabouts and his antecedents. Not that these things were of the slightest importance. The value of the material he delivered was surely all that counted.

Parts of these interminable questionnaires were, of course, quite logical and absolutely justified, and I answered every one of them as best I could. One difficulty was that I could not even get in touch with Cicero to put the questions to him. I had to wait until he telephoned me again, and that he would not do until he had



resumed his photographic activities with some success.

From Berlin they reproached me for not having made some arrangement by which I could establish contact with Cicero. Suppose he never reported again? they asked; what would we do then?

The simple answer, of course, was that in that case Operation Cicero would be over. It was quite obvious that as long as Cicero saw a chance of getting money out of us he would do his best to get it. He would go on working for us just as long as he could manage to have access to British secret documents. If he should no longer be able to get at them, then neither my best efforts nor all the wealth of the Third Reich could do anything about it.

Such reasoning seemed logical enough to me, and I was not conscious of having made any mistakes so far. In Berlin they saw things differently.

It was particularly Kaltenbrunner, newly appointed chief of the *Nachrichtendienst*, which was that part of the German secret service not controlled by the Foreign Ministry, who began to take an unpleasantly personal interest in Operation Cicero. Day after day we were inundated with signals from various members of his large staff. By now, I felt quite sure, a dozen offices in Berlin must have had whole filing systems dealing with Cicero. Doubtless scores of more or less garrulous persons were in the know, most of them quite needlessly.

Finally one day, when I was particularly busy, I received yet another signal from Berlin asking me reproachfully why I had not yet found out Cicero's real name, age and place of birth. In a burst of irritation I replied: UNABLE SO FAR ASCERTAIN REAL NAME. COULD ONLY ESTABLISH IDENTITY ET CETERA FOR CERTAIN BY DIRECT INQUIRIES AT BRITISH EMBASSY. IF THIS DESIRED PLEASE SEND WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS THAT EFFECT.

From then on I was spared further inquiries about Cicero's real name.

On November the 4th a special courier arrived from Berlin. After I had signed his receipt, he handed me a small suitcase. When I opened it I found it filled with English bank-notes, amounting to two hundred thousand pounds, all earmarked for Cicero.

On the next day, the 5th, I happened to be out of my office when I was wanted on the telephone. My secretary took the message, and later told me that a gentleman by the name of Pierre had invited me to play bridge at nine o'clock on the 6th of November. That meant that same night, I thought, remembering the stipulated difference of twenty-four hours.

After dinner I got out the big Opel I had borrowed. On the seat beside me lay a paper parcel containing the thirty thousand pounds

I owed Cicero for the last two films. I was a few minutes late when I turned into the dark street where I was to meet him.

About a hundred yards ahead I saw the sudden flicker of a torch. It was repeated twice. This could only be Cicero and it struck me as careless, this melodramatic and quite unnecessary signal. The British were not likely to be there to see his childish histrionics, but the Turkish police might be.

I was driving very slowly by now. As I opened the back door I could distinctly make him out in the light of the dimmed headlamps. He jumped into the slowly moving car, as agile as a cat. I could see him in the windscreen mirror.

"Go towards the new part of the town. I get out soon."

I trod too hard on the accelerator and the powerful car—I was not quite used to it yet—jumped forward. I went through streets and alleyways I had never seen before. A glance satisfied me that we were not being followed. Cicero gave me directions:

"Left now . . . straight on . . . right . . ."

I did as I was told. Then I heard him say, "Have you got my thirty thousand pounds?"

"Yes."

"I've brought you another film. You'll like this one."

He passed forward a roll wrapped in newspaper. I put it in my pocket and handed him, over my shoulder, the parcel containing the money. In the little mirror I noticed how he hesitated a moment or so, probably wondering whether or not to count it. Finally he simply stuffed it under his overcoat. There was an expression of triumph on his face.

I turned down a dark alley and drove slowly round the block twice. I wanted to get him to talk.

"I have to ask you a few questions. Berlin wants to know your name and nationality."

There was a moment's silence as the car glided noiselessly down the dark and narrow street.

"My name is none of your business, or Berlin's either. If you've

really got to know, you'll have to find it out for yourself, but you'd better be careful how you do it. One thing, though, you can tell Berlin: I'm no Turk, I'm an Albanian."

"You said once that you hated the British. Can you tell me why? Do they treat you badly?"

He didn't answer for a long time. I drove round the block again. I imagine the question upset him, for when he finally replied his voice was strained. In the darkness I could not see the expression on his face.

"My father was shot by an Englishman."

I can still hear the way he said that. I remember that I was deeply moved at that moment. Perhaps here was a motive more noble than mere greed for money. For the first time, and for a few minutes only, I felt a fleeting sympathy for the man behind me. He had now relapsed into complete silence.

I did not put any further questions to him that evening. Cicero said coldly, "Take the first turning to the right and the second to the left."

I did as I was told. Suddenly I felt a touch on my shoulder.

"Slow down now, please. *Au revoir.*"

By about two in the morning I had finished my night's work. This time there were only some twenty enlargements of TOP SECRET British documents. When I entered von Papen's office shortly after eleven and handed him the photographs along with my report on what Cicero had told me the night before he gave me a signal from Berlin to read. It was signed by von Steengracht, the Under-Secretary at the Foreign Ministry. The Minister wished to see me in Berlin. I was to bring along all the Cicero material, both the original films and the enlargements. A seat had been reserved for me in the courier plane that left Istanbul on the morning of November the 8th.

I left Ankara by the night train the next day. Arriving at Istanbul, I drove straight out to the airport. The Junkers 52 was waiting for me.

We were soon flying over the Sea of Marmara, unbelievably blue in the early morning sunlight. Istanbul lay beneath us in all its glorious beauty. When we refuelled at Sofia my name was called out over the loudspeaker system and I duly reported to the information desk. A tall young man in a grey military overcoat wanted to see my passport.

"I have instructions from SS General Kaltenbrunner to inform you that a special plane is waiting to take you to Berlin." I wondered at this sudden urgency to see the documents. "Please give me your ticket," he said impatiently. "I'll see to your luggage."

CHAPTER 5

THERE WAS a car waiting for me at the Berlin airport a few hours later. Even before I got into it I was told that Kaltenbrunner wished to see the Cicero documents immediately, before I showed them to Ribbentrop. Now I understood the special plane. I was soon to learn that this was the beginning of a fierce struggle between the Foreign Minister and the chief of the secret service.

I entered the imposing building at 101 Wilhelmstrasse, which has now long been a heap of rubble. There were sentries everywhere. In a huge room, behind an enormous desk, sat Kaltenbrunner. His face was much marked by duelling scars. His voice was deep and sonorous and suited the man's bulky and powerful physique.

He wasted no time in getting to the point. The documents were immediately laid out on his desk. There were four other men in the room.

"These documents," said Kaltenbrunner, "might prove to be of extreme importance if they are genuine. The gentlemen here are experts who will examine them from a technical point of view. As for you," and he turned to me again, "you are to tell us everything you know about Operation Cicero up to date. We have prepared a

list of specific questions. Consider each one carefully before answering, and then answer as fully as you can. It's still possible the whole thing might be a very cunning enemy trap. Even the most minute detail might provide decisive evidence one way or the other."

One of the men now plugged in a recording machine. Then the four experts began to ask their questions. After an hour or so I begged to be allowed a short rest. Then they began again and it went on for another hour and a half.

In the meantime the rolls of film had been taken to the laboratory, and the results of the thorough examination were brought to Kaltenbrunner.

The photographs were taken with a small stop of a very strong lens at a distance of about four feet. Photo-floodlamps in portable reflectors had been used. Of the films used, four were of American and one of German origin. They were all slightly under-exposed; this, however, had not affected the legibility of the enlargements. Every one of the exposures was perfectly focused. It would appear that the exposures had been made by an expert but in a hurry. Taking into consideration what I had said, it seemed improbable though not impossible that one person could have taken the photographs unaided.

This was the point that worried Kaltenbrunner more than any other. If Cicero had not worked alone, the possibility of it all being a British plant was obviously much increased. Yet when Kaltenbrunner reached for one or another of the documents and considered once again the amazing importance of the information revealed, he seemed to have as little doubt as I had about their genuineness.

When there were no further questions to ask, because I had nothing further to tell, the four experts were dismissed. I was now alone with Kaltenbrunner.

"Take a seat."

The atmosphere became less formal. We both sat in comfortable

arm-chairs, and I felt considerably more at ease when Kaltenbrunner, in his sonorous voice, resumed the conversation.

"I had you picked up by special plane at Sofia mainly because I wanted to see you before Ribbentrop does. I don't know whether you are aware of the fact that Ribbentrop is no friend of yours. You're too much one of von Papen's men for his liking. Ribbentrop is still firmly convinced that the British sent the valet to you and that the whole thing is a plant. You can be quite sure he'll stick to that theory out of sheer pigheadedness. At any rate it'll take him a long time to change his mind. Meanwhile intelligence of incredible importance is simply rotting in his desk and being wasted. I intend to speak to the Führer personally about it, and I'll make it my business to arrange for Operation Cicero to be handled entirely by this department. So in future you'll take your instructions from me and from nobody else. You're not to accept any more money from the Foreign Ministry for paying Cicero. Incidentally, the two hundred thousand pounds you got the other day came from me. It arrived safely, I suppose?"

I told him that it had. I then made it quite clear that it was essential for me to be absolutely certain whom I should, and whom I should not, take my orders from. Otherwise the resultant strain and confusion were likely to endanger the whole business.

Kaltenbrunner reassured me that he would get the Führer to settle the matter of administrative control once and for all.

Then he began again questioning me about Cicero's character.

"You know the man," he said. "Do you really believe he's being honest with us?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "I think he's an adventurer. He's vain, ambitious and sufficiently intelligent to have raised himself out of the class into which he was born. He doesn't belong to that class any more, but then he doesn't belong to the class above either, which he both loathes and admires. He may even be aware of that conflict in his emotions. He's lost all his roots. People like that are always dangerous. That is my opinion of what Cicero is."

"Admitting all that," said Kaltenbrunner, "couldn't he still be working for the British?"

"Possibly. I'm prejudiced on that particular point. I have no doubt whatever that, if he is, one day he'll give himself away. So far I haven't seen the slightest indication that he's anything other than what he pretends to be. I'm entirely convinced the man is genuine. Particularly after the chance remark he made about his father being shot by an Englishman."

"*What?* Cicero's father shot by an Englishman? Why on earth didn't you report that? It might be the key to the whole thing!"

"But I did. In my last report. It went by diplomatic pouch to the Foreign Ministry."

Kaltenbrunner gave me a vicious look. "When did that signal leave Ankara?" He almost shouted the question.

"Day before yesterday."

"Then Ribbentrop has deliberately kept it from me." He spat out the words. I was taken aback by this sudden loss of self-control. "What about the death of Cicero's father? Tell me!"

I repeated what Cicero had told me, and added, "It sounded to me as though he were telling the truth."

"But this is very important. It puts him in an entirely different light. Ribbentrop tried to cheat me of that information!"

He banged on the table with his clenched fist. "Try to find out all you can about his father's death. Don't skip any details. As for me, I'll certainly ask Herr von Ribbentrop what he means by not sending me your last report."

He then went back to his desk and picked up the pile of photographs, which he handed me along with the rolls of film. I took them from him and began to count them immediately. I did not want to repeat my experience of having one missing.

Kaltenbrunner watched me with an expression of sardonic amusement. He said nothing until I had finished.

"When Ribbentrop sends for you, tell him that you've already seen me. As for your future reports on Operation Cicero, you'll

receive my personal instructions when you get back to Ankara. When are you leaving, by the way?"

"I've no idea. I suppose that depends on the Foreign Minister. It was he who summoned me to Berlin."

Before I left the office I asked Kaltenbrunner to be so kind as to ring up Ribbentrop and to find out from him when he wished to see me. I felt that it would be far less unpleasant for me if Kaltenbrunner himself were to tell Ribbentrop that I had been to see him first. He did so, and I was told that the Foreign Minister would expect me at seven the following evening.

I left my briefcase with its valuable contents in Kaltenbrunner's office. He locked it up in his big desk. I felt that it would be safer there than in my hotel.

"I hope you don't have a valet," I said, attempting a joke.

Kaltenbrunner had no sense of humour.

"Your documents will be quite safe here," he replied, frigidly.

Next morning I was told by telephone that my briefcase would be brought to me at my hotel at a quarter to seven that evening.

It was delivered to me in the hall of the Kaiserhof Hotel by two very important-looking gentlemen.

"We come from SS General Kaltenbrunner. We are to accompany you to see the Foreign Minister and be present at your meeting with him."

So that's it, I thought, but I said nothing.

Just before the stroke of seven Kaltenbrunner's bulldogs and I entered the Foreign Ministry in the Wilhelmstrasse. We were led to a small office where Secretary of State von Steengracht and Herr von Altenburg were waiting.

The one hundred and twelve top secret British documents changed hands. The Secretary of State looked at them one after the other and then passed them on to von Altenburg. As they glanced at them they both shook their heads, murmuring, just as von Papen had done: "Fantastic! . . . Incredible! . . ."

"At first sight," said Herr von Steengracht, thumbing through

the photographs, "they undoubtedly appear genuine enough. Look at this one!"

He handed me the photograph of a document giving detailed information about the Casablanca conference. "We actually can confirm the accuracy of this one. We happen to be quite well informed about Casablanca. Frankly, I can't imagine the British putting such an important piece of information into our hands simply as a decoy. This looks like the real thing to me. And if this document is as genuine as it appears, I see no reason to doubt that your valet has access to his Ambassador's safe. He must be a most remarkable fellow."

"He's certainly no ordinary valet," I said, "nor, indeed, an ordinary man. He knows what he wants, his determination is enormous and, from what I've seen of him so far, he seems uncommonly intelligent and careful."

"So you believe in him?" asked Herr von Altenburg. "I mean, you rule out the possibility of his having been planted on us by the British?"

"I do. But I can't prove it. Not yet, at any rate."

Von Steengracht slowly put the photographs back into their folder.

"There's nothing else you can tell us, apart from what you've already reported?"

I shook my head.

Von Steengracht, after a brief glance in the direction of my two companions, said: "The Foreign Minister regrets he cannot see you himself today. The documents and the rolls of film will stay here. You are to remain available to be at the Minister's disposal. I suppose we can reach you at the Kaiserhof at any time?"

That was the end of the interview. It was quite clear why I had not seen Herr von Ribbentrop personally.

Two days later I received an urgent message summoning me at once to see Councillor Likus at the Foreign Ministry annex. When I got there I was told that the Minister wished to see me

immediately. During the short drive to the Ministry proper, Likus gave me some advice.

He said that Ribbentrop was in a foul temper and extremely annoyed about Kaltenbrunner's attitude. As for the Cicero documents, Ribbentrop had examined them personally. He was still convinced that the whole thing was a British trap. Recently, Likus went on, the Minister had become more suspicious than ever on all subjects, which was a considerable nuisance to all his staff. I would be wise not to contradict him if I could possibly avoid it.

As we walked along the interminable corridors of the Ministry towards Ribbentrop's ante-room, Likus gave me one further piece of advice.

"Don't, for goodness' sake, mention von Papen's name if you can possibly help it. I've often seen him lose all control of himself when someone said a friendly word about von Papen."

Thus prepared, I was shown into the presence. Likus, who at that time seemed to be one of the few who enjoyed the Minister's confidence, came, too. They were old friends—at any rate, they had been at school together.

Ribbentrop got up as we came in. He remained behind his desk, his arms folded in the manner of Napoleon, his cold blue eyes fixed on me. This was the man who was responsible for the making of German foreign policy and who it is said once remarked: "History will recognize me as a greater Bismarck."

The initial silence was most oppressive. Likus, at last, made some conventional remark and we all sat down round a table on which the Cicero documents were laid out. Ribbentrop reached for a few of them and toyed with them idly, holding them as if they were a hand of cards. Then he began to talk to me:

"So you have met this Cicero. What sort of man is he?"

I repeated what I had now said so often that I knew it almost by heart. Ribbentrop interrupted, "The man's clearly out for money. What I want to know is whether the documents are genuine. What are your views?"

"No more, sir, than what I have already reported. My personal opinion is . . ."

"I want facts," interrupted the Minister. "I'm not interested in your personal opinions. They are hardly likely to relieve my considerable misgivings. What does Jenke think?"

"He agrees with me in believing that the documents are genuine and that the man came to us of his own initiative. Herr von Papen thinks so, too."

No sooner were the words out of my mouth than I realized I had made a mistake. At the mention of the Ambassador's name Ribbentrop's expression grew more arrogant than ever, his lips tightening to a thin line. Likus gave me an exasperated look. Then Ribbentrop began to speak again, very slowly and in clipped sentences.

"I am asking you if these documents are genuine. If these alleged differences between London and Washington and Moscow are true, then I shall know what steps to take. That's all that matters. But I need facts, young man, facts—not personal opinions, your own or anybody else's. Do you feel capable of handling this assignment? Or shall I send someone else to Ankara?"

I was tempted to reply, "Send someone else, sir, by all means." However, I just sat silent. If only he would get up, I thought, and announce that the interview was over.

It was Likus again who broke the painful silence.

"It can't be easy for Moyzisch to obtain cast-iron proof of the genuineness of the documents and the bona fides, if I may use the phrase, of the man in question. If Cicero works alone, it seems logical to assume that his documents are real ones. If, on the other hand, he has an assistant, that would be a point in favour of the plant theory, though, even so, it would hardly amount to evidence. May I make a suggestion?"—and here Likus turned to me. "Perhaps you might devote your major efforts to clearing up that question?"

"A very good point, Likus," said his chief. "We'll bear it in

mind." Then, turning to me but without looking me straight in the face, Ribbentrop went on. "First, find out at all costs whether or not Cicero has someone to help him. What have you done so far along those lines?"

"Nothing, sir, except that I did put the question directly to Cicero. I depend, of course, entirely on his own statements. Should he be deceiving us I can only hope that he'll somehow give himself away."

Ribbentrop's hands were idly and nervously toying with the documents in front of him. Uncertainty and annoyance were clearly legible on his face as he glanced at the pile of glossy documents that had so far cost the Reich sixty-five thousand pounds. With a sudden gesture he thrust the whole batch away from him, over to the far side of his desk. Almost inaudibly his lips formed the words, "Too good to be true."

Then he rose.

"You are to stay in Berlin for the time being. I may want to see you again."

"But, sir, Cicero is waiting for me in Ankara, presumably with new documents."

"You are to stay in Berlin for the time being."

He gave me a curt nod. I was dismissed.

I now found myself being kept on ice. The country might be heading for disaster; day by day thousands of men who had never wanted war might die in battle; night after night big cities might be reduced to rubble; all the time Cicero might be waiting to present the Third Reich with knowledge that might provide a last chance of saving Germany. Let him wait in Ankara while two high officials in Berlin went on with their petty quarrel.

A few days later, during this unnecessarily protracted stay in Berlin, I was invited to tea by the Japanese Ambassador, Oshima. I had never met him before and I put his invitation down to the friendly relationship which I had with the Japanese Embassy in Ankara.

Ambassador Oshima received me in his study. He was very interested in conditions in Turkey, which he described as a key point in global politics. He had a lot to say about the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis, expressing disappointment in the Italian end of it. While we had tea he glanced frequently at the huge world map that covered almost one complete wall of his study. Much later, when I took my leave, after conveying his good wishes to his compatriots in Ankara, he said, "Congratulations, incidentally, on your success."

As he said it there was a ghost of a chuckle in his voice and I seemed to see a knowing smile in his dark eyes. He was obviously referring to Cicero.

That was not all. I spent one of my last evenings in Berlin, with several other guests, at a house in a residential suburb. I realized as soon as I arrived that I was somehow regarded as a celebrity, the lion of the party. I felt the shadow of Cicero behind me.

I was not to be left in doubt for long as to what was expected of me. At first I feigned deafness, then pretended to be stupid, but my hosts, as persistent as they were indiscreet, soon asked me a direct question: "Won't you tell us something about Cicero?"

I could see no way out, so, ponderously and in my most serious manner, I gave them a lengthy disquisition on the life story of Marcus Tullius Cicero, the contemporary of Julius Caesar.

On the morning of November the 22nd I was informed that the Foreign Minister had ordered me to return to Ankara. I left Berlin that same evening. It was lucky for me that I got to the Friedrichstrasse station well ahead of time. For to my surprise the train left before the scheduled time and went straight through two or three suburban stations where it was supposed to stop.

It was only at Breslau, in the middle of the night, that I learned the explanation. As our train was leaving Berlin towards the east, a strong force of British bombers was flying in from the west. It was the first of many giant raids to come. This was my last visit to Berlin before the end of the war.

CHAPTER 6

WHEN I reached Ankara I went straight to my office. My secretary told me that a Monsieur Pierre had telephoned repeatedly during my absence. He had left a message that he would probably ring again today. I nodded casually.

"Anything else?"

"Yes, there is."

Schnürchen had recently got married and she wanted a few days' leave to meet her husband in Istanbul. This would have to be unofficial.

"Granted," I said.

Then I went to see the Ambassador, who wanted all the news from Berlin. He shook his head and grew more depressed as he listened to what I had to say. When I told him of Ambassador Oshima's parting words, he became really angry.

"Official doubts about the genuineness of the documents, that I can understand. But why the devil all the boasting about the very thing they profess not to believe in? Those gossiping idiots will land us in a first-class row here in Ankara yet."

Later that afternoon Cicero telephoned. He wanted to meet me at nine o'clock. When he got in the car he seemed in the best of spirits. He had missed me, he said. I told him that I had gone to Berlin, entirely on his account. This sort of thing flattered him and he seemed pleased; however, he said that he had done one beautiful job during my absence, though he had not dared keep the films. Over fifty very highly classified documents—he couldn't be expected to carry the roll around with him indefinitely, could he? So finally he had simply exposed the film to the sunlight. He still had the roll and I would have to pay him for it at the normal rate.

"Quite out of the question," I replied. "What do you think they

would say in Berlin if I went about buying blank films at fifteen thousand pounds?"

He shrugged his shoulders and dropped the subject for the time being.

I pulled up in front of a friend's house where I had arranged to borrow a room for that evening. My friend had no clue as to who Cicero might be, and he discreetly left us as soon as he had shown us to the music room.

Cicero looked around him with some curiosity, examining the expensive and beautiful furniture. I handed him the fifteen thousand pounds for the work he had brought me before I left for Berlin. He put two new rolls of film on a little table. Then he put the roll whose contents he had had to spoil next to the other two. I picked it up and put it back in his pocket. While doing so my fingers touched something cold and metallic.

"So you carry a gun?" I asked.

"Just in case," he said, in a casual tone of voice. "I don't intend to let them catch me alive."

There were sandwiches and a decanter on the table. Cicero helped himself and sat down beside me on the sofa. He evidently felt entirely at home. When he had finished eating he asked me for a cigar.

"Tell me about your father's death," I said, as I offered him my case.

"There is nothing to tell," he replied, his manner changing. From being cheerful he suddenly became glum. "Why do you keep on at me so about my private life? If that's a German habit, all I can say is that I don't like it."

"I don't want to pry into your business. I've been told to ask you. In Berlin, for obvious reasons, they want to know more about the man who supplies them with such valuable information."

"I still don't like it. It's none of your business. I'm not your servant. I don't have to answer your questions. I risk my life getting you the documents. You pay me for them. That's all there is to it. I

see no reason why I should do anything else for you. I don't want to talk about my past."

"I'd be the last man to try to make you. I had no idea there was any secret attached to your father's death."

"He was shot, and there's no secret about it. It was an accident while they were out shooting. My father had been hired as a beater. If that idiotic Englishman had learned how to handle a gun before going shooting, my whole life would have been different. I might have had a happy childhood. But who cares about the life of a poor Albanian? Now I've got some money, plenty of money, and plenty more to come, but . . ."

"Do you know the name of the Englishman who shot your father?" I asked, after a long pause.

"I know his name all right. I went to the authorities about it, and they gave me some money. Compensation for being an orphan! It was enough to get me to Turkey. It wasn't enough to stop me hating the British."

"Have you any other reason for hating them?"

"Plenty. They treat me badly. Not the Ambassador, but some of the others. They don't regard servants as human, they seem to think that they are some sort of animal."

"Then why do you stay with them?"

"I enjoy swindling them. If I didn't stay, you wouldn't have their secret papers, would you? But I'll soon have had enough. Then I'll go somewhere where nobody knows me and where there are no Englishmen at all."

"Provided always they don't catch you first."

"I don't think they will. I've thought of everything, every little detail. And even if they do catch me, they won't take me alive."

It was nearly eleven when he left me. He declined my offer of a lift and seemed to be in a hurry.

I went back to the Embassy and locked the rolls of film in my safe. Developing and enlarging would wait until morning. I walked home, thinking over what Cicero had said.

It seemed a fairly plausible story, and I was prepared to accept it. Yet there was an element of cheap melodrama about it that left me slightly sceptical, and I did not imagine that the story would make much impression in Berlin.

On the other hand I realized that to a European, brought up as I had been in Austria, the world of an Albanian Mohammedan mountaineer, with its blood feuds and its vendettas, was bound to appear strange. We never did discover whether the story of Cicero's father's death was true, or whether he invented it in order to have some less sordid reason than money for his treachery.

The next courier plane to Berlin carried some twenty new photographs. One concerning technical details affecting the interchange of messages between London and Ankara proved of immense value to the German secret service in helping them to break an important British code.

Among this lot there was also the draft of a comprehensive report, almost entirely in the British Ambassador's own tidy handwriting. It clearly revealed the British attempt to manoeuvre Turkey into a state of armed neutrality or non-belligerency, to be followed by Turkish troop concentrations in Thrace designed to tie up as many German divisions as possible in Bulgaria. The first step was to be the breaking off of Turko-German diplomatic relations.

It was most revealing to see the enemy's intentions spelled out in detail by their most important representative. I was struck by Sir Hughe's lucid and sober assessment of the situation. He made no attempt to disguise the extent to which Turkish policy was being influenced by the personality of the German Ambassador.

Drafts and documents of this sort might have provided an invaluable lesson for our German politicians, if they had been prepared to study the well-tried methods of British diplomacy and of British political activity abroad. Unfortunately, our superiors in Berlin were entirely satisfied with themselves and with their own methods.

"Neatly arranged and elegantly formulated," was von Papen's verdict, after he had carefully studied the document. And he added dryly:

"Berlin won't enjoy this very much."

With the documents I enclosed a covering note, reporting Cicero's story about his father's death. I also mentioned that he had been alarmed by my long absence in Berlin and that he had, in consequence, destroyed one roll of film containing reproductions which he claimed to have been particularly important. This I put in purely to annoy Ribbentrop. It was my small revenge for the treatment I had received in Berlin.

In reply a few days later I got a signal ordering me, in a peremptory fashion, to get Cicero to photograph those documents again.

During the last days of November I went to Istanbul. It was a nuisance making this long journey again, but Cicero, some time before, had asked me as a special favour to get him five thousand pounds' worth of U.S. dollars. It would be foolish for him to try to change such a substantial amount at one of the local banks; it would inevitably attract attention. He wanted those dollars urgently as he had been offered a profitable investment. In order to keep him in a good temper, I told him I would help him in this matter.

I therefore kept back five thousand pounds from his next payment and took it to our own bank in Ankara, where I asked the manager if he could change that much sterling into dollars. The deal was soon made with an Armenian business man about to go abroad who wanted to buy sterling for dollars.

I had almost forgotten about this transaction when the bank manager telephoned. He had just had a cable from Switzerland; apparently a Swiss business man had bought the pound notes from the Armenian, had taken them to England and there been told that they were counterfeit. The matter had been referred back to Ankara.

I immediately signalled Berlin, and got back a most indignant

reply, stating that it was utter nonsense to doubt the genuineness of money sent out by the Wilhelmstrasse. However, so as to avoid any breath of scandal, I was instructed to reimburse the Ankara bank out of Embassy funds, the whole thing to be done discreetly. Berlin wished to hear no more about it.

While last in Berlin, I had heard rumours that British bank-notes, particularly of the larger denominations, were being forged for infiltration into neutral countries. This all came back to me now.

The business with the bank was settled without any fuss. All the same, I did not feel happy about it. It seemed almost unlikely that the Wilhelmstrasse would be so foolish as to jeopardize the whole of Operation Cicero by paying him in bad notes. But I wanted to make sure that the money I was giving him was genuine.

Therefore I picked out close to ten thousand pounds in samples from each of the many bundles of bank-notes in my safe. These I took to the manager of the bank in Istanbul with which the German Consulate-General had its dealings, telling him that they had been offered to us for sale and that I had been told to make sure that they were good. After a couple of days, when I went to get them back, I was assured that they were perfectly all right. That, at least, was one thing less to worry about.

The first courier post in December contained a huge parcel of books addressed to me which turned out to be an almost complete library dealing with the more celebrated cases of espionage in the twentieth century. There were various White Papers and official files, together with quite a few works of fiction. I had not ordered these books and had neither the time nor the desire to read them.

There was a covering note, in which I was more or less tactfully informed that a thorough study of these books would help me in handling Operation Cicero. I replied as civilly as I could that I had little time for fiction and that, so far as authentic cases went, I found it hard to detect any parallel between Operation Cicero and, say, the Mata Hari case. I suggested that if Berlin wished to

help me in my work, they could not do better than to clear up the matter of to whom exactly I was responsible. An unofficial reply informed me that I had best be patient. Ribbentrop and Kaltenbrunner were still brawling.

After a while I received a communication from Berlin marked **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL TO BE OPENED PERSONALLY**. It contained a sharply worded order from Kaltenbrunner that I was no longer to inform Ambassador von Papen about anything to do with Operation Cicero. On no account was I to show him the actual documents.

I decided there and then not to obey these instructions when I felt that any document would be of value to Herr von Papen in his work. In fact, I took the letter straight to the Ambassador to ask his advice. Von Papen was extremely annoyed and upset by it. He said that if Kaltenbrunner's order was to be endorsed by Ribbentrop he would tender his resignation at once.

So far as I was concerned, my disobedience in this matter was to put me in a most unpleasant position a little later on.

December was Cicero's great period. Never before and never again did he deliver so much or such important material. There could no longer be the slightest doubt about his genuineness.

Every courier plane to Berlin carried fresh top secret British documents, documents so important that for a while even the private war between Ribbentrop and Kaltenbrunner took second place. Ribbentrop's personal attitude towards Operation Cicero seemed to be unchanged. He read the documents but he never made the slightest effort to use the information he now possessed. Presumably he still had doubts as to whether or not the whole business was a British trick.

As for Cicero himself, he seemed a different man during that busy month. He was quite friendly now, even moderately talkative. When I asked him personal questions concerning his identity or his background, however, he made it quite clear that such matters were none of my business.

He was obviously very proud of his successes. What he liked best to talk about at our nocturnal meetings was his own future. He enjoyed thinking about the large house he was going to own in some pleasant country far away. He planned to have a great many servants. Sometimes his attitude reminded me of a child's exuberant excitement on Christmas Eve.

Cicero had changed considerably in appearance. He now wore well-cut suits of the best English cloth and expensive shoes with crêpe soles. One day, when he appeared wearing a large and flamboyant gold wrist-watch, I thought it time I spoke to him.

"Don't you think your chief and other people might begin to wonder where the money is coming from to pay for all your new and obviously expensive possessions? Frankly, I think you're being a little rash."

Cicero looked at me thoughtfully. After a few moments he took off the wrist-watch and asked me to keep it for him until he had a chance to take it to Istanbul and store it there with his other jewellery.

He was very fond of jewels. On one occasion he asked me to give him his usual fifteen thousand pounds in the form of diamonds and other precious stones. He said he was afraid of arousing suspicion if he bought them himself.

I told him that it would seem equally suspicious if I were to buy fifteen thousand pounds' worth of diamonds. I did, however, finally agree to get him a couple of thousand pounds' worth. I felt that that was about the limit I could safely go in pretending I was buying presents for my wife.

Another noticeable change was in Cicero's finger nails. When I had first met him they had been bitten down to the quick. Now they were grown again. He even had them manicured. And this was not the only evidence to show that his earlier nervousness had completely left him. He had given up peeping behind curtains and jerking open doors. He was entirely self-assured, and I was even afraid that he might become careless.

Shortly after the Allied conferences in Cairo and Teheran were over, Cicero rang up and asked for a meeting. I had to attend an official dinner that evening, so I asked him to meet me a little earlier than usual.

At eight o'clock I was at our established meeting-place, and with that curious, cat-like agility of his he jumped into the slow-moving car. He seemed to be in rather a hurry. I passed him a fat bundle of money which he stuffed right into his pocket while passing me two rolls of film. He said he would have some more for me in a few days' time, and at the next dark corner he slipped out of my car as quietly as he had entered it.

I did not want to be any later than necessary for the dinner party, so I drove straight there instead of first dropping the films at the Embassy.

It was not a particularly pleasant dinner for me. I could not stop myself from putting my hand in my pocket every two minutes to make sure of my rolls of film. As soon as I decently could, I made some excuse, took my wife home and went back to the Embassy. I had intended just to lock the films in the safe and leave the developing till the morning. But my curiosity was too strong and I decided to do the job at once.

Finishing just as dawn was breaking, I found that I had in my possession complete minutes of the entire conferences at Cairo and at Teheran.

I worked on, all through the morning, writing a provisional report for the Ambassador to forward to Berlin. Good old Schnürchen, when she came to my office at nine sharp, was probably surprised to see her chief wearing a dinner jacket at the typewriter. Once again she showed her perfect diplomatic training: she made no comment.

With this delivery the sequence of events and development of Allied policy that was covered by the three recent meetings of Allied leaders became entirely clear to us. First there had been the Moscow conference, called by Stalin and attended by Eden and

Cordell Hull; then came the Cairo talks of Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek; and finally there was the great Teheran conference of the Big Three.

That morning while I typed a résumé of what the batch of photographs on my desk told me, I realized with brutal clarity that what I was writing was nothing more or less than a preview of Germany's destruction. The Moscow conference had done the preparatory work; the Teheran conference had applied the finishing touches. Here a new world had been planned, whose premise was the utter blotting out of the Third Reich and the punishment of its guilty leaders. I never learned what effect these revelations had on the men whose personal fate had just been decided at Teheran. For myself I trembled with emotion at the vast historical perspective opened by these stolen documents.

I spent a very busy day drafting long signals. That evening I met Cicero again. He had yet another roll of film for me. This one contained only a few exposures, but at least one of them was of vital importance. We immediately wired Berlin that the Head of the Turkish State had gone to Cairo to meet President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. Up to then none of us in Turkey, and certainly no one in Berlin, even suspected that President Ismet Inonu and the Turkish Foreign Minister had left Ankara.

Cicero now began to be more reckless. Every second or third day he produced fresh material. I had given him a brand new Leica sent from Berlin, and I got him all the film he needed from Berlin, since it might have drawn attention had he bought such quantities from the one photography shop in Ankara.

We were still in the second week of December when he telephoned once again asking me to meet him that night. As usual we drove aimlessly through the dark streets and alleys of Ankara, while from the back he handed over a roll of film and I passed him his money. This time, though, he gave me a small package in addition to the roll of film.

"Open it later," he said. "They'll know what to do with it in Berlin."

I was about to ask him what it contained when I was blinded by the headlights of another car reflected in my mirror.

Leaning out I saw a long dark limousine some twenty yards behind us. I remember congratulating myself that I had taken care of my back licence plate; it was bent and well coated with dried mud. Also the German make of my car was not easily discernible at night; at a superficial glance that big, streamlined Opel looked like one of the many new American cars so plentiful in Ankara.

I decided to draw in to the kerb to let the limousine pass me. The car behind stopped, too, still at a distance of about twenty yards. Now I really began to get worried. The other car's powerful headlights lit up the interior of the Opel. Cicero was evidently unaware of what was going on. He seemed merely to be bothered by the light, as he drew the curtains of the back window. At that moment I heard the other car's horn and saw in my mirror that it was slowly creeping up towards us.

I was deadly frightened and drove off as fast as I could, putting on more and more speed, trying to shake off the car behind. I soon realized that it had at least as much speed as my Opel. Furthermore, I could not go full out, since I did not dare risk an accident. Meanwhile, the dark limousine kept close behind me, always at the same distance. I reduced speed to a mere crawl. So did the other car. I had no doubt in my mind that Cicero had been shadowed.

I went through a very narrow and dark alleyway, taking the corner rather slowly, and then suddenly accelerated as heavily as I could, tearing round another corner and then another one. It was no good. In the mirror I could still see the reflection of the dark limousine, twenty yards behind me.

While tearing round those street corners, I glanced at Cicero's

reflection in the mirror. He was hunched in his corner, deadly white, aware now that his life was at stake. "Can't you go faster?" His voice was a hoarse whisper.

It occurred to me to try and reach one of the great new motor-roads that radiated out from Ankara over the plains. On one of them I could drive my big car flat out and I might be able to shake off the limousine. I realized at once that this plan was useless. The roads were marvellous, but there were no turnings. Whoever left on one of them had to come back the same way. The British, if it were they, would not even have to bother to chase me. They could simply wait until I came back.

I had no gun. I never carried one while I was in Ankara. There seemed no point, since I would certainly never fire the first shot and the second would be too late. But Cicero had a revolver. By now he was palpably panic-stricken, hunched there, chewing on his finger nails. For him to have a loaded gun in his pocket was, I thought, extremely dangerous for everyone concerned.

Once again I tried the old trick. I crossed an intersection very slowly. So did my pursuers. Then I raced round the corner and round another one and round still a third. It was touch and go. The car skidded on two wheels, screeching on the turns. Back in the straight I got the car under control again. Doubling round two more corners, I reached the great central boulevard of Ankara, where I accelerated to sixty and then seventy and seventy-five. Looking round I saw to my intense relief that there was no one behind me. I kept my foot pressed down, the accelerator flat against the floorboards. It was lucky that the boulevard, with its many crossings, was completely deserted at that hour of the night. We raced straight on up the steep road. A solitary policeman jumped for his life. There was one corner. With screaming brakes I went from sixty miles an hour to dead slow. We were one hundred yards from the British Embassy. Without a word Cicero jumped out. The darkness swallowed him up.

It was only when I got to my office that I realized I was shak-



ing all over. My shirt was soaked through and my hair, wet with perspiration, stuck to my forehead.

I put the new roll of film away in my safe, and poured myself a much-needed drink. Then I broke the string on the small package. Wrapped in cotton wool and tissue paper was a hard object. It fell out of my still shaky fingers. I picked it up and found that it was a small black object; it had a waxy smell. I had no idea what it was and was about to put it in my drawer when I turned it over and saw on the back the clear imprint of two complicated keys.

Cicero had said they would know what to do with this object in Berlin; they certainly would. It was just a lump of ordinary cobbler's wax; the imprint was that of the keys to the British Ambassador's safe.

CHAPTER 7

THAT HECTIC motor-car chase in the dead of night through the streets and back alleys of Ankara was the first indication we had that anybody on the outside knew anything about Operation Cicero. I have never really found out who was after us. I find it hard to believe that it was the British. If it was, then they did not know who was in my car with me, for if they had, Cicero could obviously have had no further access to the Ambassador's safe. As it was, he continued to rifle it for some months to come.

I am inclined to think the dark limousine was a Turkish police car. My reason for this idea is a curious incident that occurred a few days later.

I was dining at the Jenkes' house. Among the guests were some senior officials of the Turkish Foreign Ministry. After dinner, one of these Turkish gentlemen suddenly said to me:

"My dear Moyzisch, you seem to be an extraordinarily reckless

driver. You ought to be more careful, you know, particularly at night."

He dropped this remark quite casually into the small talk. I needed all my presence of mind to conceal my real feelings. I smiled politely and thanked him for his well-meant advice.

What, I wondered, did the man really know? Though he could presumably explain the mystery of that chase, I obviously could not ask him to do so. If it had been a Turkish car, did they know who my passenger had been? I have puzzled over all this for a long time now. It seems unlikely that I shall ever find a satisfactory solution.

Cicero had been a nervous wreck when eventually he slipped out of my car that night; yet he must have regained his self-confidence almost immediately, for three days later I had another call from him. This time I took him to my friend's house.

He wanted to know if his lump of cobbler's wax had been sent to Berlin. He needed those keys urgently. They would enable him to do his photographing while his chief was away from the Embassy. He would feel much safer working that way.

This was Cicero's evening off, and he seemed to have plenty of time. Helping himself freely to drinks, sandwiches and cigars, he appeared to be in a most carefree and unreserved mood, boasting a good deal about his achievements, his ambitions and, above all, his cultured background. In the future he intended to devote himself to music. He would, he said, have done so earlier in life had circumstances permitted. He was very proud of his tenor voice, and he insisted on singing some arias from Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*. He had a pleasant, light voice; but what really struck me that night, as I sat there listening to him, was the change that came over his hard and ugly face as he sang. Music seemed to make a different man of him.

Cicero was mellow that evening and the wine made him mellow. This gave me a good opportunity for discharging a recent instruction from Berlin, namely to cut the rate of payment per roll

of film from fifteen thousand pounds to ten thousand pounds. Somewhat to my surprise, Cicero readily agreed to this.

A day or two later he delivered a film which was to cause me endless worry and trouble. On the enlarged print of one of the documents a finger and a thumb were clearly visible, showing how the original had been held while the exposure was being made. There could be no doubt whatever that they were Cicero's. He wore a rather conspicuous signet ring on his index finger and that ring was clearly visible in the photograph. My first thought was that if the British should ever get hold of this print it would mean the end for Cicero.

The important point was that here seemed to be almost incontrovertible evidence that Cicero did have an assistant after all. And this, in its turn, would reopen all the old arguments about the genuineness of the material.

How Cicero photographed the documents had been one of the prime interests of Berlin from the start. Cicero had told me again and again that he held the Leica in one hand, using no tripod or any other form of support. With a finger of this hand he released the shutter and made the exposure. It would seem almost impossible to hold the camera and take the exposure with one hand without wobbling, and quite impossible at the same time to be holding the document to be photographed. Either Cicero had had a collaborator or he had misinformed me about his method.

As soon as Berlin received the significant photograph, they began inundating me with telegrams: why? how? with what? and so forth. They nearly drove me frantic. No one could possibly doubt the genuineness of the documents, since internal evidence, all our available external evidence, as well as subsequent events, bore it out. Suppose Cicero did have an accomplice, whom, for some reason, he did not mention. What difference did that make? To regard this minor point as the crux of the whole operation, to keep on asking irritating questions which only annoyed Cicero seemed to me to be utter imbecility.

Then some bureaucrat had a brilliant idea. A trusted photographic expert, who could also speak French, was flown to Ankara. He brought with him a microphone and a long list of highly technical questions which I had to learn by heart.

Finally, after much persuasion, I managed to get Cicero to come to my office again. He did not want to do so, as he rightly considered it to be an entirely unnecessary risk.

I asked him all the many technical questions which Berlin had thought up. Every word of this conversation was recorded by means of the specialist's hidden microphone.

Having seen Cicero safely off the premises, I returned to my office where the Berlin expert was now waiting.

"There is just a possibility," he said ponderously, "that your man might have made the exposures alone. I for one, however, would consider it most improbable."

I never saw the official report of our photographic expert. His visit had one satisfactory result from my point of view. Henceforth, I was no longer pestered by telegrams which I was quite unable to answer.

That exciting month of December was still far from over. My last, and greatest, crisis of that year was caused indirectly by the Ambassador.

Shortly before Christmas, Cicero's delivery included a document dealing with recent developments in Anglo-Turkish relations. It showed that, in view of Germany's deteriorating military position, Ankara was prepared to yield to British demands for a much-increased "infiltration" of military, naval and R.A.F. personnel into Turkey. Figures were given. From the German point of view this was most important. In the circumstances I considered this a case where it was my duty to disobey Kaltenbrunner's instructions, and I showed Herr von Papen this grimly serious document.

The Ambassador was very worried because of the probable reactions of Ribbentrop and his clique. When they learned about these developments they could be expected to react violently. One

result might be that Ribbentrop's basically anti-Turkish attitude would be endorsed by the Führer and the high command, provoking reckless measures. In view of these possibilities, Herr von Papen decided to act at once. It was a bold step he took, and the results were far-reaching.

He asked for an immediate interview with M. Numan, the Turkish Foreign Minister. They had a long talk, alone together, and when the Minister tried to dispel the German Ambassador's suspicions concerning an imminent or indeed actual violation of neutrality, Herr von Papen did not hesitate to call his bluff. He did not, of course, actually quote any of the information derived from Cicero, but he did make it quite clear that he knew a great deal more than the Turkish Government might imagine. He had to do this. It was essential, from the German point of view, to let the Turks see that Germany was well aware of the nature of those highly confidential Anglo-Turkish staff talks. It was the diplomat's way of exercising pressure, the idea behind it being that the mere hint of German reprisals might make the Turks a little more cautious in their military commitments to the British. Von Papen certainly scored a bull's-eye.

M. Numan was as experienced a diplomat as the German Ambassador. He simply said that von Papen must have been misinformed. Finally, while not exactly denying that a few conversations might have been held by military experts in Ankara or in London, he said that it would be wrong to attach any great importance to such talks. And again, just before the German Ambassador left, the Turkish Minister did his best to minimize the significance of a possible understanding with London.

The moment Herr von Papen had gone, M. Numan sent for the British Ambassador. He told him every word of what von Papen had said. They both agreed that von Papen could not possibly be so well-informed unless there were some high-level leakage, either on the British or on the Turkish side.

Sir Hughe immediately informed the Foreign Office in con-

siderable detail about the conversation he had just had with the Turkish Foreign Minister. I imagine that this report caused considerable anxiety in Whitehall. Less than thirty hours after this signal had been sent to London, I held its photo-copy in my hand. To this day I can remember the last sentence of Sir Hughe's report: "Von Papen evidently knows more than is good for him."

The British signal made it quite clear that von Papen, when interviewing Numan, had information which Berlin would realize could only have derived from the most recent Cicero documents. In the first week of December, as already stated, I had received strict orders from Kaltenbrunner to withhold all these documents from the Ambassador. It would be apparent that I had deliberately disobeyed a very plain order.

I thought of extracting that document. That would be quite useless, since Berlin would still have the negative, which they would immediately develop. I thought of concealing the existence of the whole roll. Yet I had to account for the ten thousand pounds that it had cost us. I even toyed with the idea of replacing the money myself, but even if I had been able to raise that large sum in the very short time available, I would have had enormous difficulty in buying sterling. No, it was an impasse. With a heavy heart I sealed the documents in the usual envelope. I felt as though I were posting off my own death warrant.

For a while nothing happened at all. Kaltenbrunner's silence was far more unnerving than the most severe reprimand. After a week or so a courier brought me a letter TO BE OPENED PERSONALLY. It was a brief note, written on Kaltenbrunner's orders, curtly informing me that I would be held responsible for a gross breach of discipline in disobeying strict orders. Ribbentrop seemed to have nothing to say either on this or on the vital political issues involved. One could trust him not to back up his own people.

As for Cicero, he was suddenly in very great danger. It was evident that both at the British Embassy in Ankara and in London suspicions were now aroused.

How far von Papen's *démarche* with the Turkish Foreign Minister ultimately affected the further course of Operation Cicero, I cannot say. It is certain, though, that once the suspicions of the British were aroused, they made intense efforts to find out where the German Ambassador was getting his information.

TOWARDS the middle of December our Press Attaché, Seiler, had to go to Sofia on official business. While there he went through the first of the American air raids on that city.

It was in the air-raid shelter of the German Legation, during one of these raids, that Seiler first met Elisabet, who was to become deeply involved in Operation Cicero. Elisabet was not the girl's real name, but for the sake of her family I do not propose to reveal her identity.

Elisabet's father, a career diplomat of the old school, held a highly responsible position at the German Legation in Sofia. Elisabet herself had some sort of secretarial job. She was highly strung; she took the raids very badly and her parents felt that her nerves were near breaking point. Her father adored her, and he asked Seiler if he could possibly find some position for the girl either with the Ankara Embassy or with the Istanbul Consulate. He felt that it was essential for his daughter to have a rest in a neutral country.

When he got back to Ankara Seiler told me about this. He knew that I was looking urgently for a second secretary, since Schnürchen, while closing the door of the office safe, had caught her thumb in it and could only type with one hand.

Elisabet sounded like exactly the sort of girl I was looking for—the daughter of a highly respected German diplomat, herself experienced in secretarial work and in the Diplomatic Service, an excellent linguist, and by reason of her background, bound to be thoroughly reliable. In view of Operation Cicero the last consideration was far and away the most important.

The Ambassador had no objection to Elisabet's transfer from Sofia to Ankara. He knew and respected her father. The transfer met with the approval of the chief of personnel at the Foreign Ministry in Berlin. The only person who might make difficulties about it was Kaltenbrunner; in view of Operation Cicero he, too, had to be consulted about all changes of personnel. Since there was a slight delay in receiving his approval, I wrote a long letter, pointing out that I could not handle all my work without some additional help.

In reply I received the offer of a male secretary to be sent from Berlin. The implication was obvious, and I did not care for the idea of having one of Kaltenbrunner's stool pigeons sent to spy on me. All I wanted was a reliable girl who could type and who had a fair knowledge of English and French.

The fact that I was responsible for Operation Cicero presumably put me in a fairly strong position. I finally did obtain Kaltenbrunner's consent and so Elisabet, whom I had never seen, was transferred from Sofia to Ankara.

She arrived in the first week of January. I went to meet her at the station. The first impression she made on me was appalling. She struck me as perfectly dreadful. I am not, I think, unduly squeamish, but her appearance when she stepped off that train at Ankara was a shock. She was a platinum blonde in her middle twenties, of average height, with long, stringy, untidy hair. Her eyes were dull, with a sort of glazed expression. Her skin had an unhealthy, greyish tinge.

I persuaded myself that her appearance was probably due to the long journey and the hard time she had had at Sofia. I took her to the small hotel where I had booked a room for her, and then to my house where my wife had prepared supper for her.

My wife was equally taken aback by Elisabet. The girl had a most irritating way of trying to appear blasé and sophisticated. She seemed completely uninterested in this strange new city, built to order on a barren plain. She seemed, in fact, uninterested in

everything. From the moment I met her, Elisabet was an enigma to me. She still is.

Seiler, who had spoken to me about her in the first place, told me that the Elisabet he saw in Ankara seemed a different person from the girl he had known in Sofia. Whatever the reason for this sudden change may have been, I never found it out.

The day after she arrived, Elisabet fell ill. A few days later, when I went to call on her, I noticed on her bedside table some boxes of sleeping pills. It occurred to me then that the girl's state might be due to an exaggerated use of sedatives.

After ten days the doctor said she was well enough to start work. I gave her simple jobs, mainly translations from the British and French press. Her work proved thoroughly unsatisfactory, full of mistakes and oversights, and very untidily presented. This, at least, I did not expect, since her linguistic qualifications were excellent. She spoke English and French with scarcely a trace of a foreign accent.

She was a nuisance rather than a help in my office, yet, since I had asked so urgently that she be sent to me from Sofia, I felt I must make the best of it. Moreover, I still hoped that in time she might get over her lethargy and stop being so slovenly. To make her feel that she was being trusted and so to encourage her, I let her deal from time to time with slightly more confidential matters than mere press translations. Of course, I told her nothing about Cicero.

I thought that in time Elisabet would surely do something about her looks, when she recovered from the exhaustion of her journey and of the Sofia raids. I was wrong. Finally, one day I asked my good friend Schnürchen to drop a tactful hint to the girl that she do something about her appearance.

Elisabet, being highly sensitive, seemed to guess that the suggestion came originally from me. She resented it, though she did go to the hairdresser. When she came back she looked a different girl and from then on, apart from occasional relapses, she seemed

to go to the other extreme, spending a lot of time and money on her appearance. Still, she certainly made me aware of her resentment at my interference. For several days she would not speak to me at all.

I was too trusting in regard to Elisabet and that was a serious mistake. A more serious one was my reluctance to interfere in her private life. I soon learned that she was having an affair with one of two Germans interned at Ankara, men I shall call Hans and Fritz. They had arrived in Turkey a few months before with a dramatic story of having bailed out over the Black Sea after being shot down by a superior force of Russian fighter planes. Investigation later proved they had deserted from the *Luftwaffe*.

These young men were enjoying to the full the extremely decent internment conditions accorded by the Turks to combatants of all nations. I cannot now remember which of the two Elisabet was reputedly seeing too often. That sort of gossip I have always hated and done my best to ignore. I felt that my secretary's private life was entirely her own affair and absolutely no concern of mine. I dare say in theory I was right. Had I been an ordinary businessman, there would have been no harm done. But ordinary businessmen do not ordinarily deal with men like Cicero.

After a time Elisabet took a flat in one of the many apartment houses in Ankara. Had I been a little more inquisitive, I might have found out in time that the apartment above Elisabet's was occupied by an employee of the British Embassy.

A small pebble can start a landslide. Elisabet was to play a decisive part in Operation Cicero. She would probably never have become involved in it at all, at least certainly not in the rôle she ultimately assumed, if she had liked me. Looking back on it all now, I can see, I think, the occasion on which she started to dislike me, the exact moment at which the small pebble was dislodged.

One day I was dictating to her in my office. She had crossed her knees in such a way as to reveal a great deal of her shapely legs.

This irritated me. After some minutes, as I passed her, I stopped and, with some joking remark, pulled down her skirt an inch or two. She blushed furiously. She said nothing, but at that moment I was quite certain that she hated me.

CHAPTER 8

THE KEYS made in Berlin fitted the British Ambassador's safe perfectly. Cicero told me that he could now do most of his work while his chief was out. He got a lot of material, but he never again approached the results achieved in December. There was a good reason for this. Conditions at the British Embassy were not nearly so easy for Cicero as they had been.

He, of course, knew nothing about von Papen's talk with the Turkish Foreign Minister and the latter's subsequent conversation with Sir Hughe. But he certainly saw the practical results, for British security measures were immediately and rigorously tightened up.

As early as mid-January, Cicero told me, various men began arriving at the British Embassy from London, apparently engaged on mysterious errands. It seemed obvious to me that they were doing a security check-up, and I guessed that the British authorities suspected that the leakage was somewhere inside their Embassy. All the safes were being fitted with specially devised safety alarms.

It was a dangerous situation for Cicero. A wiser man would have called the whole thing off then and there. Cicero had already received well over two hundred thousand pounds from me, which should have been enough to keep him in all the luxury he wanted for the rest of his life.

On January 14th, 1944, any doubts Berlin might still have harboured about the genuineness of the documents were dispelled once and for all in a singularly ghastly manner. In an operation

such as Cicero, one is apt to forget that the real stakes are the lives of human beings. On January 14th I was to be forcibly reminded of that fact.

Among the documents provided by Cicero in December was a copy of the minutes of military staff talks held during the Teheran conference. It had then been decided to start a series of heavy bombing attacks on the capitals of the Balkan countries allied to Germany—Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria. The first city on the list was Sofia and the raid was to take place on January 14th. Thanks to Cicero, Berlin, as well as the German authorities in Sofia, knew of this plan well over two weeks before that date.

If this raid came off, Berlin informed me, it would be final proof of the genuineness of the Cicero documents; nothing less than the death of thousands of innocent civilians would convince Ribbentrop and Kaltenbrunner. It was an awful position to be in, knowing what was going to happen and quite unable to do anything to prevent it.

Late on January 14th I put through a call to the German Legation at Sofia. The tension of waiting had become intolerable and I had to know what was going on there.

"The connection with Sofia is broken," said the Ankara operator.

It was not until early morning on the 15th that I finally got through. I spoke to an official at our Legation who said, "We've just had the heaviest raid yet. The whole town's on fire. Four thousand casualties—men, women and children."

I wondered if Berlin was satisfied now.

For a couple of weeks thereafter Cicero did not dare to touch the safe. He said that before attempting another job he would have to find out how the newly installed safety devices worked. Late in January he told me he had a bit of luck. He happened to be in the next room, he said, while the Ambassador was talking to security experts from London. By listening to what they said he had managed to pick up how the new devices worked.

I did not at the time tell Cicero that this was tacit admission that he had been lying when he had told me that he could speak no English. I had never really believed that. Obviously if he could follow a conversation which must have been of a highly technical nature, his mastery of English must be at least as good as I had always suspected it to be.

A few days later Cicero told me that the Ambassador's safe had jammed. Experts and tools were flown out from England and finally the safe was opened again. According to Cicero, he managed to be present while this was being done and thus saw exactly how these new security devices worked. He elaborated this extraordinarily unlikely tale with a highly involved description of the complex new arrangements for guarding the safe—electromagnetic devices, infra-red rays and so on. I think he said all this merely to stress his own ingenuity in dealing with these new difficulties and I suspect that a great part of it was made up.

His motive was plain enough. He maintained that the work was now so difficult and so dangerous that he must have at least double his present fee; that is, he wanted twenty thousand pounds per roll of film, each guaranteed to contain a minimum of fifteen exposures. I refused and we kept to the same price.

Now I realized why Cicero had lied to me about his knowledge of English. By telling me over and over again that he hardly knew a word of the language, he implied that he obviously could not judge the importance of the documents he photographed. Therefore, since he could not guarantee to deliver only the highest level material, we would have to pay for all the rolls he brought us even if some of them should be of no interest to Berlin.

Up to February this issue had not arisen. In the early days and particularly in December, almost everything that Cicero gave us was extremely valuable. Now, however, it was no longer easy, if indeed it was possible at all, for him to get at the really top secret documents, and so he began to make use of the scheme he had carefully planned from the very beginning.

One day he delivered a roll of films containing considerably more than the fifteen shots. After I had developed and enlarged it, I found that all it contained was a very long, and incidentally incomplete, statement of petty expenditures within the British Embassy. Of course, it had no value for us whatsoever. Furthermore, I considered it most unlikely that the Ambassador would keep this sort of thing in his private safe. For this roll Cicero demanded his usual ten thousand pounds.

I told him that I could not possibly pay for that sort of rubbish. Cicero insisted that I knew perfectly well that he couldn't understand English and, hence, that he had never been able to judge the value of what he photographed. Therefore, he demanded his usual payment.

It seemed very simple to me. He had deliberately produced this worthless stuff to see if he could get away with it. If he could, he would presumably go on doing so as long as the contents of the Ambassador's safe were denied him.

I said that I would have to refer the matter to Berlin. In a reply, which came by the next courier, I was curtly told to pay Cicero his ten thousand pounds.

When I handed him the money he grinned broadly. I told him that I entirely disagreed with Berlin and that I was well aware of the game he was playing. He shrugged his shoulders and said that henceforth he would only select documents classified Top Secret, Most Secret or Secret. His English, he explained, was good enough for him to recognize those words.

From then on, as a matter of fact, we frequently spoke in English together.

At the end of January I went to Bursa, a famous Turkish watering-place, for a rest. It was my first leave since arriving in Turkey. For at least a week I was determined to forget all about Cicero. I had hardly been there a day when a telephone call from Ankara put an end to my holiday.

An official had vanished from the Istanbul Consulate. It was

almost certain that he had deserted to the British. Since I had known the man, and the head of his department was a good friend of mine, I was required to return to Ankara at once. Also there was the question of whether the man's defection had had any repercussions on my own work. My department had been in close contact with the Istanbul Consulate. I returned to Ankara that evening, deeply worried.

That desertion, which was the first of a series, caused a considerable sensation. The man had occupied a key position in the *Abwehr*, the High Command's counter-espionage service, and he had taken with him information that would prove of great value to Germany's enemies in Turkey.

Shortly afterwards there was a second case of desertion and, within a few days, a third.

Elisabet worked herself up into quite a state over all this. She said she could not understand how any German could go over to the enemy while his country was engaged in a life-and-death struggle. She regarded such behaviour as the most despicable thing a man could do.

I was somewhat taken back by her vehemence. It was unusual for Elisabet to show any excitement, or even interest, about anything, and this sign that she was getting over her habitual indifference pleased me. Under the impact of these sensational events she became quite talkative. She told me one day about her two brothers, who were officers serving at the front, and she spoke at length about the duty of every non-combatant to help the soldiers who day and night were risking their lives for Führer and Fatherland.

At the office this sort of talk did not impress us very much. But I felt some satisfaction at seeing Elisabet show signs of vitality, even if they only took the form of parrot-like repetition of propaganda. It was a turn for the better and, what is more, it seemed to last. Elisabet began to accept invitations to parties. She even laughed sometimes. And once or twice she went so far as to make

a joke herself. It seemed as though my hopes of winning her confidence were being realized. She came to my house on occasions now, and I arranged for her to be invited out by my colleagues. In fact, we went to a great deal of trouble to make the girl feel that she was liked and was one of us.

Yet there was always something strange about her. It was difficult not to be irritated by her sudden fits of behaving as though she were utterly bored. Many times at parties I saw a group of cheerfully talking people fall silent as Elisabet approached. Still, she did seem to be improving.

We would occasionally talk together and once we had a short conversation which, in retrospect, seems to have considerable significance. We were alone in my office. I was drafting a report and she was busy translating an article from *The Times*. Suddenly she looked up and said, "Do you think Germany can still win the war?"

"Of course I do," I replied, somewhat abruptly.

"Why do you think so? The position looks very bad on all the fronts, doesn't it?"

I pushed my paper and pencil to one side and looked up at her.

"Yes, things do look bad. What with American material and Russian man power the war is theoretically lost, I agree. But there's still politics and diplomacy. A war is only finally lost when a country is defeated in those fields, too."

"And if that should happen?"

"Then it would be God's will. There'd be nothing we could do about it."

"But isn't there any way out?"

"I don't think so. It's as though we were all sitting in a very fast train headed for a crash. A man is as likely to break his neck by jumping out as by staying in. That is . . . if we are heading for a crash."

"How about the emergency brake?"

Elisabet was now looking me full in the face, something she had

hardly ever done before. I could not make out what it was that she was getting at.

"What you are saying," I answered, "is equivalent to trying to stop the wheels of destiny. I personally would never presume to try that, merely for my own sake."

Elisabet went back to her work, but suddenly she asked, "What do you think about the Istanbul desertions?"

"Not much. They've jumped out of the train too late. After a man's been on one side all these years he should not change over now. I can respect a man who has always been against us, or who left us before our failure was apparent or even probable. To do so now seems to me undignified to say the least. On the other hand, I've no idea what private motives those deserters may have had."

"Aren't there rather a lot of Germans turning traitor just now? There've been similar cases in Stockholm and Madrid."

"So I've heard." I ended the conversation abruptly. It was a long time before I thought of it again.

When I arrived in my office the next morning I found Elisabet hunched over her desk, sobbing hysterically. There was nothing I could do. Schnürchen, when she came in, managed partially to calm the girl down. Elisabet never told either of us the reason for that sudden outburst of tears. I suggested that she should go home and rest.

She went without a word. In the afternoon she was back. She mumbled a few words of apology and went on with the unfinished translation on her desk. The result was very poor, full of typing errors and other mistakes.

I kept an eye on Elisabet for the rest of that afternoon. She would stare out of the window for minutes on end, sighing deeply. Once I noticed that she reached for the French dictionary while doing an English translation. It took her some time to notice her mistake.

Next day, though, she seemed entirely recovered. She was care-

free and more cheerful than I had ever seen her before. Then, one day in March, Schnürchen went down with influenza. I was now left alone with Elisabet. I must admit that she worked very hard and far more conscientiously than usual. She was certainly trying to handle all the extra work, a great deal of which was quite unfamiliar to her.

The worst day of each week was always the one before the departure of the courier plane. It generally involved working until late in the night so as to have everything ready for the post that left at noon next day. Late in the afternoon on one of these busy days, when I had finished dictating, Elisabet volunteered to stay on and finish the work so that there would be no rush in the morning. I was very tired and appreciated her offer.

I went home and for the first time left her the key to the safe. I was so exhausted that I went straight to bed. But I could not sleep. Towards midnight I began to worry about having left the key with Elisabet. It was not that I suspected her of anything; I was merely afraid that she might forget to lock the safe properly or even lose the key on her way home.

There was no sense in my lying there fretting. I got up, dressed, and drove to the Embassy. A light still shone in my office. The heavy curtains were not drawn, and against the blind I could see Elisabet's shadow as she moved about.

When I entered the room she was seated at her typewriter. She jumped as I came in.

"It's high time you were in bed, Elisabet. Never mind if you haven't quite finished. We've got the whole morning tomorrow, you know."

"But I prefer working at night and I'm not the least bit tired," she said.

I was in no mood to argue. I insisted on her knocking off at once. She got up reluctantly. The key was in the safe and when all the papers had been put away I locked it. Then I put the key in my pocket.

Elisabet looked straight at me. "Don't you trust me? Your other secretary is allowed to keep the key."

"If I didn't trust you I shouldn't have let you have it in the first place. I'm taking it now merely because it worries me not to have it with me and I want to sleep peacefully tonight."

She said again that she was afraid I did not trust her. Two big tears rolled down her cheeks. There was a look in her eyes as though she were a dog I had unjustly beaten. It made me feel a brute.

We walked out to my car in silence. I offered to give her a lift home but she declined it abruptly.

The next few days were uneventful. One day, during the luncheon break, Elisabet came into my office with two letters from her brother on the Eastern Front. She seemed to be deeply devoted to this brother and was always happy when she heard from him. Would I care to read the letters?

I did not want to hurt her feelings, so I took the letters, and began to read rather unwillingly. My mood soon changed. After only a few lines I was deeply impressed. Her brother knew how to express himself. This was the simple record of the feelings of an honest young man who was doing a grim job as well as he could and who was deeply worried about the future of his country and of the people and the home he loved.

I was sincerely moved. When I had finished reading I handed the letters back to Elisabet and thanked her for having allowed me to see them.

A few minutes later she was again leaning on her typewriter, sobbing bitterly.

These sudden outbursts of tears and hysteria occurred every few days. Between them Elisabet presented an equally pointless and unbalanced appearance of cheerfulness.

I never could make out what was the matter with her. Whatever it was, it interfered hopelessly with the work that had to be done in my office. Finally, I felt compelled to go to the Amba-



Howard Willard

sador and tell him I had to get rid of Elisabet.

Herr von Papen was not inclined to co-operate. But when I pointed out the risk involved in having a hysterical girl in the office from which Operation Cicero was being handled, he became thoughtful.

At last he promised to write a personal letter to Elisabet's father, who was now stationed in Budapest, telling him of her condition and asking him to come and take her away. She, of course, would know nothing about all this.

I was delighted with this diplomatic solution to the problem. He sent a letter to Elisabet's father by the next courier plane; it was a great load off my mind.

Meanwhile I was seeing much less of Cicero. He did produce a roll of film from time to time, but the material was nowhere near his former standard. Probably, since the tightening up of security measures by the British, important documents only remained in the Ambassador's safe for as long as the Ambassador was dealing with them. Cicero was therefore more dependent on luck than he had previously been.

Even so, he did at that time have one considerable success. For several weeks we had noticed that many of the recent documents were hinting at an important operation. Once I had come across a new code name, Operation Overlord. For a long time we had no indication as to what this "Overlord" might be. Nor was Berlin any the wiser, as I gathered from an urgent signal, repeated to most of the other embassies and legations, instructing all of us to find out at all costs what this code name meant.

I told Cicero that if, at any time, he heard the word "Overlord" mentioned in the British Embassy, he was to memorize the exact context and report to me at once. He merely shrugged his shoulders. As usual, it was no use giving him orders.

For some time I had no clue as to the nature of Operation Overlord.

Then one day I recalled another passage in a Cicero docu-

ment, which I soon found in my file. It was a signal from London to the British Ambassador in Ankara, insisting that certain Anglo-Turkish negotiations must be completed on or before May 15th. I had a feeling that this might have some bearing.

Then there were other passages in the Cicero file, extracts from the minutes of the Moscow and Teheran conferences, showing that Churchill, under considerable pressure from the Kremlin, had committed himself to opening a second front in Europe in 1944.

Finally, I was quite convinced that Operation Overlord was the code name for the second front. I immediately sent a signal to Berlin, giving my theory and the reasons that led up to it in detail. A week later I received a laconic reply: "Possible but hardly probable."

That roll of film with the reference to Operation Overlord, delivered at the beginning of March, was Cicero's final delivery. It was not until the early hours of June 6th, 1944, when the enormous Anglo-American armada appeared out of the dawn off the Normandy coast, that Germany received final confirmation of the mysterious code word's real meaning.

It seems ironic that the last piece of invaluable information supplied by Cicero should have been treated by Berlin with exactly the same lack of comprehension as all the others.

CHAPTER 9

IT WAS bound to happen sooner or later. Towards the end of March Elisabet learned about Operation Cicero. I was in Istanbul on one occasion when the diplomatic bag from Berlin arrived in Ankara. Since Schnürchen was still away sick, Elisabet opened the correspondence addressed to my department. Generally great care was taken to put all messages referring to Cicero in a special envelope, addressed to me, and marked: **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL TO BE OPENED PERSONALLY**. Berlin had forgotten about the special

envelope. In consequence Elisabet opened it and read the message.

I felt vaguely worried when I returned to Ankara and Elisabet gave me the contents of the courier's pouch. I felt much more worried when she asked me, quite innocently, "Who is Cicero?"

I tried to ignore the question, but she repeated it.

"Listen," I said, when I saw that I could not very well avoid answering her. "There are certain matters I have to deal with entirely on my own. This is one of them. Please don't ask me any more questions."

I read the message with particular attention. Berlin's carelessness in the matter of the envelope was very unfortunate, since the message in question made it quite clear to anyone who read it that Operation Cicero referred to something going on inside the British Embassy.

A few days later, after office hours, I gave Elisabet a lift into town. She wanted to buy some things. When we reached Ankara's main shopping street, she asked me to accompany her while she bought lingerie. I had no particular desire to go with her, but she could speak no Turkish and she asked me to help her make her purchases.

She was a most difficult customer. The wretched attendant had piled up a regular mountain of materials on the counter while Elisabet was trying to make up her mind. She was still undecided which one to choose when a tinkle of the shop bell announced another customer. It was Cicero.

Of course, I ignored him. He stood first behind me, and then next to Elisabet, and he, too, gave no indication that he had ever seen me before in his life. He ordered shirts, made to measure, very expensive silk shirts.

When he had finished Elisabet was still not satisfied with the things she had been shown. My knowledge of Turkish is limited and I had difficulty in explaining to the assistant exactly what it was she wanted.

Cicero, who spoke perfect Turkish, offered to act as interpreter.

He did it with considerable charm and adroitness, speaking to Elisabet in French. He took one piece after another of the flimsy materials lying on the counter and draped himself in them, as though he were a professional mannequin. Elisabet laughed, and soon they were joking as though they had known one another for years. I was feeling thoroughly uncomfortable and I think the whole situation amused Cicero. He asked her if she was German, and when she said she was, he inquired politely if she enjoyed the life in Ankara.

"Very much indeed," she replied with a smile.

Cicero, after paying for his shirts from a huge roll of notes, took his leave of Elisabet with an accomplished, if somewhat exaggerated, bow. Then, while no one was looking, he gave me a broad wink. There was a knowing and cynical smile on his lips.

She, of course, had no idea that this friendly, elderly man was the Cicero about whom she had been questioning me. And neither he nor I suspected that a few days later, if it had not already happened, Elisabet was to decide the fate of both of us.

At length Herr von Papen received an answer from Elisabet's father. Personal circumstances prevented his collecting Elisabet until after Easter.

It was not very long to wait.

One fine spring morning a small incident occurred to which I failed at the time to attach any significance. Work was slack, and Elisabet asked me politely if I could spare a few minutes for a friend of hers in the *Luftwaffe*, the man I have called Hans. She said he was looking for work.

She was evidently anxious to help the young man and, of course, I remembered the gossip I had heard about her having an affair with a flying man. I agreed to see him.

Next day both the fliers came to my office.

It was the first time I had ever talked to them, though I knew them by sight. They wasted a lot of my time perorating about the Fatherland, a soldier's duties and their own particular desire

to get back to the front and fight for the Führer. Unfortunately, having given their word to the Ambassador, they could not escape from internment as otherwise they would most assuredly have done long ago.

Finally, they came to the point and asked me if I could give them jobs. It didn't matter what it was so long as they could make enough to pay for their cigarettes. Even that was a detail; all they really wanted was to make themselves useful and work for Germany. I let them finish their rather lengthy speech, then I gave them the only possible answer: there was nothing I could do for them.

They left my office reluctantly. I was glad to see the last of them. I did not care for either of them. There was something definitely wrong about their manner, polite and even subservient though it had been.

Elisabet never mentioned the fliers to me again, but her behaviour left not the slightest doubt in my mind that she deeply resented my refusal to help her friends.

A few days later there was another scene in the office, with Elisabet once again in floods of tears. This time I was, I suppose, a little to blame.

Schnürchen had been on leave for just over a week and Elisabet had done the extra work remarkably well. She turned out to be far more reliable than I had expected. I had to leave her in charge of the office for hours on end when the Ambassador sent for me or I was attending official meetings. She always looked after everything quite satisfactorily in my absence.

Incidentally, by now she was more or less well-informed about the nature of Operation Cicero, though she knew nothing of the details.

Then Schnürchen came back and once again took over the main part of the work.

So Elisabet went back to her translations from the foreign press. Despite her excellent knowledge of languages, she had always

been very bad at this sort of work. The reason was that she clearly disliked it. Her typescripts were full of errors, grammatical faults and simple mistakes in translation. I invariably had to correct them, which I usually did without comment.

But on that particular morning she produced a translation so hopelessly inadequate that I showed my annoyance.

"I've no use for this sort of work. The thing's one mass of idiotic mistakes. I know perfectly well that you can do much better than this. You'll have to do it again."

I shoved the typescript back at her and at once I realized the mistake I had made. I should not have lost my temper. After all, she would soon be gone.

Elisabet's face went white with anger. She took the typewritten pages, gave me a murderous look and left the room without a word. In the ante-room she savagely tore up the typescript into small pieces. Then she flung herself into an arm-chair and burst into tears.

I could hear her sobs from my office and I went out to her.

"Now listen, Elisabet," I said, with almost exaggerated calm, "do try to be more reasonable. We all have to put up with being scolded from time to time. Don't you think that the Ambassador reprimands me when I do something wrong?"

"It's not that," she said, her voice muffled by tears. "It's the way you don't trust me. Nothing but those horrible, dull translations. I can't bear it any more. Won't you let me do some proper work for you again?"

I had no idea what to do with this hysterical creature. I see now that the most sensible line to have taken would have been one of kindly firmness. But I was too irritated. Besides, I had tried that and there had been no end to these scenes.

"If you don't like your work here, you'd better go back to your old job in Sofia, if that's what you want. I'll see that it's arranged at once."

Elisabet raised her head, tears still streaming down her face.

"So you want to get rid of me!" she whispered. Her voice was husky and her lips trembled.

"No, I don't want you to go," I lied, "but if you're unhappy here I shan't stop you."

Perhaps, I thought, she will say she would rather be in Sofia or with her father in Budapest.

No such luck. All she did was turn on her heel, run out of the room and slam the door behind her. Half an hour later she was back. She apologized for her behaviour. We were back exactly where we had been before.

On Monday, April 3rd, which was the first day of Easter week, Elisabet came into my office and asked, "Would it be possible for me to have a few days' leave over Easter to spend the week with my parents in Budapest? I know I'm not due for it but, you see, my brother's getting leave and he'll be there, too."

I was delighted at her request, and had to use considerable self-control not to show it. Once she is in Budapest, I thought, her father can keep her there. But I knew Elisabet well enough to be sure that if I let her see how glad I was to have her go, she would change her mind and probably refuse to do so.

So I frowned and said, "Not a very good moment for you to go off. You've still got a lot of work outstanding."

"It'd make me so terribly happy if you'd let me. And I promise I'll get everything finished by Thursday."

"In that case," I said, my expression becoming less severe, "you can have your leave. You want to go on Thursday?"

On Tuesday and Wednesday we did not see much of Elisabet in the office. She apologized politely, saying she still had a lot of shopping to do. I had no objections, even though she was clearly making no attempt to get her work finished before she left.

Once I saw her in town. She was carrying a large parcel.

"A new coat," she said with a smile, "for Easter in Budapest."

On Wednesday she came to the office for a few hours. As she worked at her translations she was humming cheerfully to herself.

She would be back a week from today, she said. She wanted to promise me here and now that she would cause me no more trouble.

I bought the ticket to Istanbul for her. As usual the railway clerk maintained that all seats on the train were sold out, and I had to pay double for the ticket. I did so gladly. I would willingly have paid three times the amount he asked for to get rid of her so easily.

On the Thursday morning, that is, the 6th of April, 1944, Elisabeth came to the office to say goodbye to Schnürchen and me. I said I would see her off on the train that afternoon. She told me please not to bother. But I had left her train ticket at home. Furthermore, though I did not tell her this, I wanted to make sure she actually went.

"Then I shan't say goodbye just yet," said Elisabeth, "since I'll be seeing you again before I go."

By half past five I was at the station. The train was already standing at the platform, but there was still nearly half an hour before it was due to leave. I stood near the entrance of the station, with Elisabeth's ticket in my pocket.

Five minutes before the train was due to leave I began to get nervous. "Why can't that wretched girl be punctual?" I thought.

Elisabeth did not come. The train left without her.

I was really worried now. I went straight from the station to her apartment, which she had recently been sharing with another girl from the Embassy. It was this girl who answered the doorbell.

"Where is Elisabeth?" I asked.

She told me Elisabeth had left the apartment at three o'clock with two big trunks and a suitcase. I was by now completely nonplussed. I sat on her bed and tried to think where she could possibly have gone.

Might she have committed suicide? With Elisabeth that was not impossible. But why had she taken all her luggage? Since three

that afternoon no other train had left Ankara, so presumably she was still somewhere in the town.

I took my car out and hunted through every corner of Ankara. I sought out every acquaintance of Elisabet's I could think of. Over and over again I asked the question, "Have you seen my secretary by any chance?"

No one had.

Shortly before midnight I went to the hotel where the two German fliers were interned. When I had identified myself to the Turkish security officer, I was shown to the room occupied by Hans and Fritz.

I knocked sharply and an irritated voice asked me what I wanted. I said who I was and that I must speak to them on an urgent matter. The door was unbolted by one of them wearing pyjamas. At the far end of the room I could see the other one.

"Do you know where Elisabet is? She's completely vanished."

"Why should I? I haven't seen her for several days. Anyhow she's not in here. As you can see for yourself!"

With a sneer he opened the door fully and ostentatiously stepped back so that I could see the whole room.

"Have you no idea where she might be?"

I looked him straight in the face. He glanced down at the floor, avoiding my eyes. There was something definitely shifty about him. My question had evidently taken him unawares, but he soon regained his surly composure.

"I just told you. I haven't seen your secretary for over a week. Do you doubt my word?"

A few days before this man had humbly begged me to give him any sort of a job. There was nothing humble about him now.

What was I to do? I phoned our consulate at Istanbul and asked an official to meet the train that would get in from Ankara next morning. I gave an exact description of Elisabet. Perhaps she had been on the train after all and for some obscure reason had chosen to hide from me.

At midnight the next train left Ankara. It did not go to Istanbul but to Adana. I searched this train, looking into every compartment. There was no trace of Elisabet. Then it occurred to me that maybe—provided she were still alive—she had motored out of Ankara and would get on this train at the first stop, which was about six or seven miles away. It was a far-fetched idea, but I jumped into my car and drove furiously through the night. I reached the station a minute before the train pulled in. No one got on it at all.

There was nothing more I could do that night. I sat and tried to think. Where on earth could she be? Had she made the same choice as the Istanbul deserters? In that case it meant ruin for me and possibly even death.

Perhaps she had been involved in an accident. We would find out all about it in the morning. And yet, how about her luggage? Try as I might, I could not put the idea of desertion out of my mind.

At eight the next morning I went again to the apartment house where Elisabet had lived.

Weary, anxious and full of forebodings, I trudged slowly up the stairs. I was so deep in thought that I went one floor higher than I meant to do. I rang the bell without looking at the door. No answer. I rang again. The front door of the next apartment was opened by a stout, elderly lady. She told me that the gentleman was not at home.

“What gentleman?” I asked.

Then I noticed the card tacked to the door. The flat belonged to a junior secretary at the British Embassy. It seemed an unpleasant omen.

I felt more shaken than ever as I walked down the short flight to the floor below. I rang the right bell this time. All I learned was that Elisabet had not been back.

As soon as I thought he would be in his office I called on a senior official at the Turkish Ministry of the Interior, a friendly man whom I knew quite well. Sitting opposite him in his com-

fortable office, I told him all about Elisabet's disappearance. I asked him if the Turkish authorities could discreetly help me to find the girl, adding that von Papen was most anxious for nothing to appear in the papers. He thought for some time before answering. Then he said:

"I don't believe that there's been an accident or suicide. If there had been I'd know of it by now. I'm afraid I think it far more likely that your secretary has followed the example of the German deserters in Istanbul." As he saw me to the door, he added, "I hope for your sake I'm wrong."

When I got to my office an answer had come in from Istanbul. There had been no one on the train who in any way fitted my description of Elisabet.

I had no choice now. Berlin must be informed. I drafted the most difficult signal of my life, reporting that my secretary had vanished without trace and that, while the possibilities of suicide or accident could not yet be ruled out, it was equally possible that she had deserted to the British.

When I had dispatched this signal I knew very well that with every hour that passed her desertion was more of a probability.

An avalanche of excited signals began now to come in from Berlin, each of them asking questions I could not possibly answer. Needless to say, all these signals also contained a peremptory order to find the girl at all costs.

The days dragged by in a sort of nightmare.

On the fifth day after Elisabet's disappearance I received a signal from Kaltenbrunner's office, ordering me to report to Berlin at once. I was to fly by the next courier plane. I took the night train to Istanbul on the 12th of April. My plane for Berlin was leaving on the 14th. I had a shrewd idea of what was waiting for me when I should get there.

As soon as I arrived in Istanbul I borrowed a friend's car and spent most of the day driving aimlessly through the streets of that great city. I hoped quite illogically that Elisabet might be there

and that by some coincidence I might run into her. I did not.

The German courier plane arrived on the afternoon of the 13th. The next morning it would take me to Berlin.

In the Consulate the mail bags were being sorted. I asked them to let me have a look to see if there was any mail for me. There were two further messages from Kaltenbrunner and one from the Foreign Ministry. In each I was severely reprimanded for Elisabeth's disappearance. They all stressed the fact that it was due entirely to my urgent request that the girl had been transferred from Sofia in the first place.

I put the signals back in the bag, and was about to lock it up when I noticed a small brown envelope, also addressed to me. I opened it and as I read the few lines hastily scribbled on a sheet of writing paper my hands began to tremble.

The message was from a friend of mine in the Foreign Ministry. It said that in certain high places I was suspected of having helped my secretary to escape. I would almost certainly be arrested as soon as I set foot on German soil.

CHAPTER 10

THE PLANE for Berlin was leaving next morning. I walked about the streets of Istanbul for hours. There was no friend I could turn to for help or advice. Finally I thought of a means of postponement. Late that night I encoded a telegram to Berlin, informing my superiors that I had fallen ill and that my doctor had forbidden me to travel by air.

Back in my hotel, I took a long, cold shower in an attempt to clear my head.

I was just turning off the water when the telephone rang. Still dripping wet, I reached for the receiver. From the other end of the line somebody spoke to me in English.

"I am calling you on behalf of the British. If you go to Berlin

tomorrow you will almost certainly be shot. We want to give you a chance. Come over to us and save your life and the lives of your wife and children."

I hung up.

Instead of going to bed as I had originally intended, I began to dress again. Dead-tired though I was, I could not possibly sleep. The telephone rang again. This time it was another voice, speaking German with a strong foreign accent.

"What you are about to do is mad. Think well before you make your decision. The British are humane. Come to the Consulate and talk it over with Mr. ——"

The voice mentioned a name I had heard frequently. I was trembling all over as I put the receiver down without a word.

A few minutes later it rang again.

"This is Dr. P—— speaking. You remember me, don't you?"

It was a fellow Viennese. I had never spoken to him, but we used to be on nodding terms.

"Listen," he said. "Listen carefully. I am authorized to make you one more offer, an offer to save your life. You have no need to be afraid of the consequences of anything you have done. The British know you are a decent sort and have merely carried out instructions. I can meet you tonight. I can tell you exactly what the British have to offer you. I have been with them for a long time now. Will you meet me?"

"I can't do it," I said. "Apart from anything else, there are practical and personal reasons why I can't. Most of my family is in Germany. Besides, to run out just now, when the ship's beginning to sink . . . No, I can't do it. Don't you understand?"

"Of course I do. But what about the future? What about your children? This opportunity won't be repeated. Besides, when Germany has lost the war you may find yourself held responsible for quite a few things if you stay where you are."

"I can't do it, Doctor," I said. "I dare say you mean well. Thank you."

I put back the receiver and ran downstairs. There were two or three men standing about in the hall. It seemed to me that they stared at me curiously as I walked past them to the little room that held the hotel switchboard.

"I don't want any more calls put through to my room tonight as I'm going to bed," I said.

I placed ten Turkish pounds on the chair beside the switchboard girl. She nodded.

Then I went back to my room. I was half undressed when the telephone rang. Evidently someone had paid her more than I had.

At first, I tried to ignore it, but as the ringing went on and on I finally picked up the receiver.

It was still another voice. "If you go to Berlin you're finished. Think before it's too late."

I took out my pocket knife and cut through the telephone wire. As I did so I wondered whether I really did not want to listen to them any more, or was I beginning to doubt my own powers of resistance?

I could not sleep. At two o'clock I walked down to the hall and used the porter's telephone to put through a long-distance call to my wife in Ankara. I told her not to let the children out of her sight for a minute and to keep all the doors of the house firmly locked until I got back. I would explain everything then. It had suddenly occurred to me that someone might try to kidnap my children. It seems a crazy idea, but those were crazy, melodramatic times.

Next morning the German courier plane took off for Berlin without me. I left Istanbul on the train to Ankara that night. It was an appalling trip.

When I got back I found that my secretary's flight had become common knowledge. Still no one knew for certain where she had gone.

On the second day after my return from Istanbul, Cicero rang up. He wanted to see me urgently. We met at my friend's

flat at ten that night. He was plainly very nervous. He confirmed what I already knew but had not yet fully admitted.

"Your secretary's with the British," he said at once. I nodded. He added, "She's still in Ankara," and told me the address.

Then he asked, "What does she know about me?"

I really did not know. I could only guess. And what I did guess was not too pleasant. I said, after a pause, "She knows your code name, perhaps more."

He stared at me hard, his face white, gripping the back of the couch. "You're quite sure she hasn't taken any of the photographs with her?"

"Quite sure."

I could say that with certainty. I had counted them and they were all in my safe. This reassured Cicero slightly. I said, "You'd better get out of Ankara just as fast as you can."

He didn't answer. He just sat there on the couch, staring in front of him. At last he got up.

"I must be going now."

He stood in front of me, acute anxiety written all over his face, a beaten man with no resilience left in him. There was cold fear in his dark eyes. "*Au revoir, monsieur*," he said.

For the first time I gave him my hand. He shook it limply.

Then he quickly walked out of the house and vanished into the darkness. I never saw him again.

I did not go to my office for some time. In any case I was officially sick and unfit to travel. When I told the Ambassador what had happened, omitting no details, he showed his usual sympathy and understanding.

I had been to the office once. My first action after my return to Ankara had been to examine the contents of my safe most thoroughly. There was nothing missing. Apparently the only thing Elisabet had been able to give the enemy was her knowledge, unless, of course, she had copied out certain documents.

With nothing to do and deeply depressed as I was, I became

really ill. For a few days I was confined to my bed and ran a temperature. When I got up again and looked into the mirror my face seemed completely changed. The hair around my temples showed the first few streaks of white.

There was no word from Berlin. I had reported that Elisabet was now known to be with the British, but I had received no reply. Nor was there any comment on my interrupted journey to Berlin. This silence was ominous.

I had been on fairly good terms with the first Istanbul deserter as well as with the second and was a friend of their unfortunate departmental chief. I had urgently insisted on Elisabet's transfer to a neutral country, and I had neither foreseen nor prevented her defection to the enemy camp. Putting all this together I appeared in a highly suspicious light.

That was not all. For personal as well as for political reasons I had sided with Herr von Papen in almost all our internal squabbles and differences of opinion. That was certainly not in my favour either with Kaltenbrunner or with Ribbentrop. Worst of all I had shown von Papen the Cicero documents, thereby deliberately disobeying a direct order.

After a couple of weeks I began going to my office again. I had the feeling that everyone was staring at me. Rightly or wrongly I imagined them to be whispering behind my back. I began to feel, probably quite erroneously, that I was being cut or avoided.

One day, when I came home, the maid told me that there were two gentlemen waiting in the drawing-room. I went in and found Hans and Fritz, who by now had quite given up their pretence of being two heroic airmen. They were simply two German deserters. The conclusive evidence had arrived from Berlin a few days before.

The airmen wasted no time in getting down to business. "We've come to see you on instructions from the British——"

I interrupted them. I asked them to leave my house and to tell

me outside whatever it was that they had to say. Out in the street they began again.

"We have been instructed by the British Embassy to ask you to put yourself at their disposal. You have nothing to fear from them. On the other hand, if you're fool enough to decline their offer, you'd better watch out."

I had no doubt that the direct threat contained in that last sentence was not part of their instructions. I returned to my house without a word.

My wife and I were dining that night at the Japanese Embassy. Shortly before midnight I was summoned to the telephone. It was our maid. She urged me to come home at once. She rang off as soon as she had said this and before I could find out what the matter was.

I thought immediately of the children. From her tone of voice it sounded as though something terrible had happened. Without saying anything to my wife or my hosts, I jumped into my car and drove home at breakneck speed.

I ran up the stairs to the nursery four at a time. The children were sleeping peacefully. Mopping my forehead I went down to the drawing-room intending to give myself a stiff whisky and soda before asking the maid what the trouble was. To my surprise the lights were on. Then I saw, sitting on the sofa, a man I had known for many years.

"I must apologize for calling on you in this way and at this hour," he said. "But what I have to say is of extreme urgency. We know that you are no longer *persona grata* in Berlin. This is your last chance to safeguard your future. I know that other people have approached you and you've refused. I'm not asking you to desert, but to meet a member of the British Embassy and talk the matter over with him. It commits you to nothing."

I had known this man for a long time. I had no idea that he had already changed sides. Did I really have to run away from my countrymen, frightened of being punished for something I had

not done? I tried hard to convince my visitor that while I would do everything in my power to help shorten this horrible war, I would never desert to the enemy.

I explained this at considerable length for I wanted to convince the British once and for all that they were wasting their time with me. I hoped that they would give up their attempts if I made my point of view sufficiently clear. When I had finished, their emissary got up.

"I understand your sentiments," he said. "I wish I thought I could persuade you to change your mind. I see I can't and, frankly, I almost like it better this way."

This was the last attempt they made to persuade me to give up my fundamentally hopeless position.

It had not been easy for me to resist their offers. It had cost me most of what nervous stamina I still had left. Therefore the next blow hit me all the harder.

One morning the courier bag from Berlin contained a letter for me: "You are herewith notified that an inquiry has been opened to establish the extent to which you are guilty of aiding and abetting your secretary's desertion to the enemy on April 6th."

The same day I received a letter at home which contained a single sheet of white paper, folded in four. There was no address and no signature, just one line of German typescript: IN THE BRITISH EMBASSY EVERYTHING IS KNOWN ABOUT CICERO.

One detail struck me. There were two typing errors in a single line.

CHAPTER 11

THAT is really the end of Operation Cicero. The war soon entered its ultimate cataclysmic stage and with the opening of the great final campaign in the East and West any possibility of a negotiated peace fast faded. Even had Cicero continued somehow

to deliver his material, it seems doubtful if it would have been of any value to Germany once the final battles were joined.

My own predicament was solved for me by the breakdown of Turko-German relations. In May 1944, the Turks came to an agreement with the Allies which led, a few months later, to the severance of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Germany. During this period I managed to postpone going to Germany as I had been ordered.

From May to August I was engaged, with other German officials in Turkey, in organizing the evacuation of the fairly large German colony still resident there. The Turks had informed us that they all had to leave by the end of August or be interned as hostile aliens.

The German Ambassador left on August 5th, 1944, and three special trains were scheduled to transport the rest of the Germans before the end of the month.

I was by no means anxious to go back to Germany and I had arranged to travel on the last of these trains. As it happened, this one never left Ankara. By then the Red Army, advancing through the Balkans, had cut the line somewhere between Sofia and Belgrade.

Thus, on August 31st, my family and I, together with the other few remaining members of the Embassy staff and the German colony, were interned. We were not put into a camp, but simply stayed on the Embassy premises, the only change being that we were surrounded by a few strands of barbed wire and Turkish sentries.

That internment was merely a temporary measure while we awaited suitable transportation to Germany. We expected to go on a Swedish ship before the end of the year. Once again I was lucky; there was no Swedish ship available until the end of April 1945. By then Hitler was dead and the Third Reich at its last gasp.

I and a few hundred other German diplomats put to sea at Istanbul. By the time we reached Gibraltar the war was over. Since

there was now no German government, there was also no German diplomatic service. We had, therefore, lost our immunity. A few of us were interned for some time by the British, first in England and later in the British Zone in Germany.

Having been interrogated, I was released and sent back to Vienna, which is my home. There I rejoined my wife and children who had spent a part of the time in Sweden. Once or twice during the Nuremberg trials, I was sent for by the court to give evidence. No charge was ever preferred against me and I am glad to say that I was sent back to civilian life with a clean record. I now live at a small place near Innsbruck in the Austrian Tyrol, where I am export manager with a textile firm.

Ribbentrop and Kaltenbrunner were both condemned to death at Nuremberg and hanged. Herr von Papen, who was also a defendant at that celebrated trial, was completely acquitted. He now lives in Western Germany.

What happened to the girl I have called Elisabet I do not know. She vanished completely and to this very day even her family has no idea where she lives or, indeed, if she is still alive.

Cicero vanished, too; shortly after our last interview he was no longer at the British Embassy. Whether he was arrested or whether he got away in time, I have no way of knowing and I probably never shall. The archives of the British Intelligence Service might reveal what happened to him; they might but they almost certainly will not.

If Cicero did get away with his money, he would not have been able to enjoy for long the life of extreme luxury that he had planned to live. He was intending to build a large house in some paradisiacal part of the globe where there were no Englishmen. Even if he found that remote, improbable place, the money he had received would hardly enable him to spend the rest of his life in anything larger than a comfortable cottage. He had received from me notes to the value of three hundred thousand pounds, or rather over a million dollars at the then rate of exchange, in bundles of

ten-, twenty- and fifty-pound notes.

After Operation Cicero was over, I learned that nearly all these bank-notes were forgeries. It seems probable that the first batch, sent by the Foreign Ministry, were genuine; but I have no doubt that the two hundred thousand sent by the *Nachrichtendienst* were just as certainly "Made in Germany" as was the suitcase that carried them from Kaltenbrunner's office in Berlin to my safe in Ankara.

The people in Kaltenbrunner's forgery department were very clever at their job. The false notes were so well made that even bank managers fell for them. Our manager at Istanbul was not the only one to be taken in. It was only when they reached the Bank of England and were examined by the experts of Threadneedle Street, that the truth was finally established.

If Cicero got away with his real, or non-counterfeit earnings, what he took with him was presumably thirty-five thousand pounds, twenty thousand dollars and two thousand pounds' worth of diamonds—less, of course, what he had already spent in Ankara on silk shirts and wrist-watches; a fairly substantial sum, it is true, but only a little over one tenth of the money he thought he had made.

Incidentally, this seems to me the explanation of why Berlin had no hesitation in paying ten thousand pounds for the statement of petty expenses inside the British Embassy. In fact they bought a worthless roll of film with worthless pieces of paper.

Thinking back over that exciting period of my life as dispassionately as I can and after a lapse of well over five years, I cannot help detecting a touch of rather grim irony in the fact that most of the money paid to Cicero was counterfeit. It seems somehow symbolic of the whole business. This was the greatest sum of money ever demanded in the history of espionage, demanded, it is true, for the greatest value ever offered—documents giving precise, last-minute information on the most secret plans of the enemy. And the upshot of it all was that the money paid was a

forgery and the information was never taken seriously enough to be used.

For here, to my mind, is historically the most important point about Operation Cicero. In the long run all that the German leaders learned from those documents was simply this: they were about to lose the war. And this unpleasant fact they refused to face.

It was the crucial period of the war, the turn of the tide. I hoped at the time that the almost fantastically complete and accurate information that was presented to the German leaders would make them realize that the alternatives for Germany were no longer victory or defeat but defeat or utter annihilation.

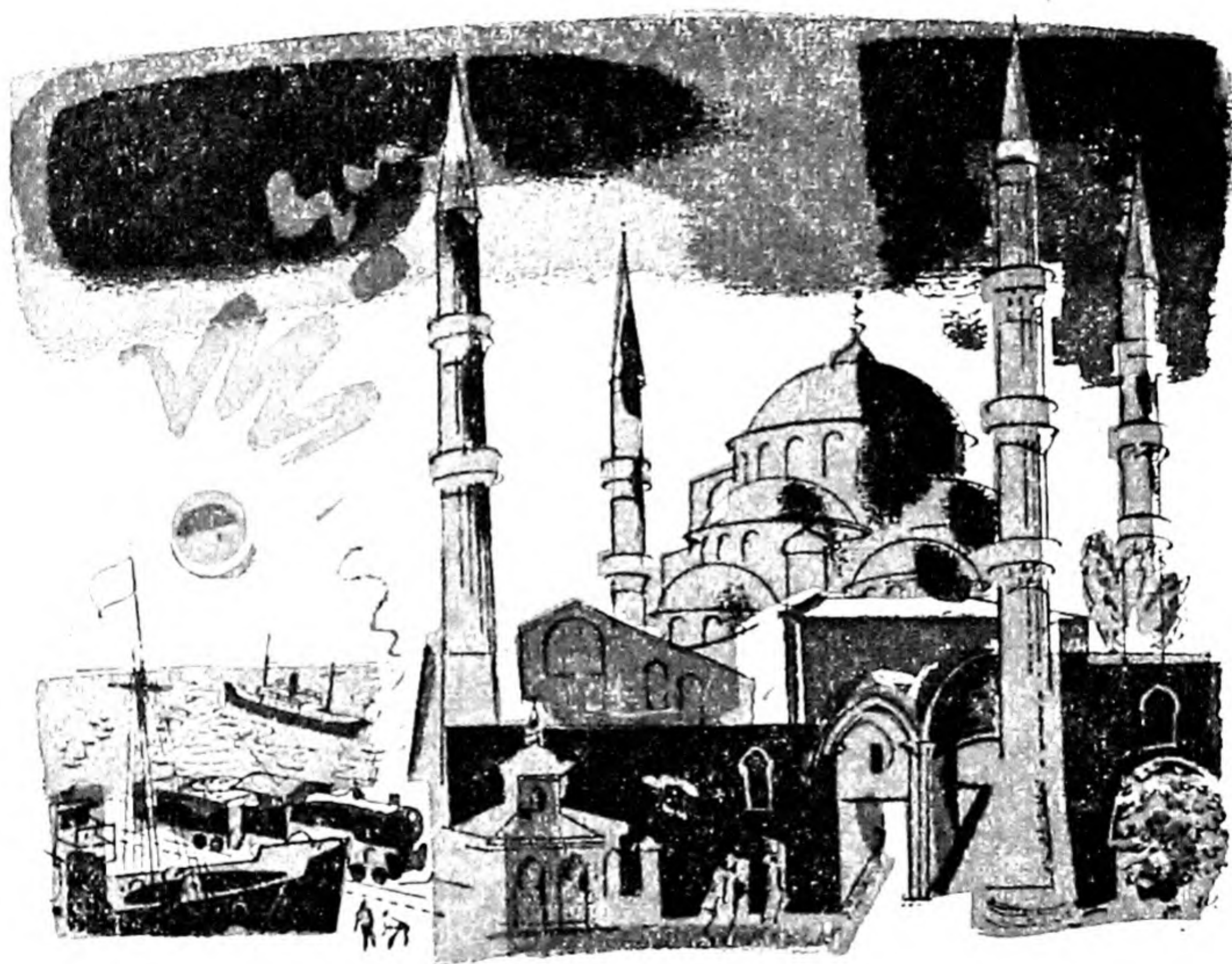
I see now, of course, that Ribbentrop and the rest could not possibly have faced these consequences without destroying themselves. They knew that the Allies would never negotiate with them. So, at the cost of incalculable suffering to their country and, indeed, to the whole world, they decided to ignore the facts that Cicero had revealed to them.

That was the real reason for Berlin's prolonged suspicion of the documents, even when their genuineness was established beyond the shadow of a doubt. They trusted them well enough whenever the message happened to be one they wanted to hear. Ribbentrop attached immense importance to any evidence that the Cicero documents contained about a rift or a mere misunderstanding between the Eastern and Western Allies. Yet he never initiated any diplomatic move to make use of such knowledge with a view to a possible negotiated peace on the Eastern front.

I well remember how eagerly Berlin lapped up every detail about Churchill's serious illness during that winter. Churchill on his deathbed; that was what the Führer wanted to hear. Much more important information, though less welcome, contained in the same documents, was brushed aside as meaningless or, more foolishly still, as something planted by the British.

Failure to face reality, to understand what the world was really

like—that was perhaps the greatest single stupidity of the Nazi leaders. Their attitude towards Operation Cicero typified this. They were counterfeit patriots. It seems oddly suitable that they should have paid for information they were incapable of using with counterfeit money.





L. C. Moyzisch

LUDWIG CARL MOYZISCH was born in Vienna in 1905. At the age of twenty-three he entered the civil service, from which he was expelled some five years later because of his political views. Forced to find a new niche for himself, Moyzisch became a journalist. As a correspondent in the Balkans he gradually discovered that he possessed an unusual gift for languages.

In March 1938 Moyzisch was recalled to Vienna, reinstated in the civil service and appointed press officer to the *Reichsstadtalteerei* in his native city. This work, coupled with his linguistic ability, led to an appointment as attaché to the German Embassy in Ankara, where he experienced the astonishing adventures related in his book.

Today Moyzisch is living at Innsbruck, Austria, with his wife and two children. He has permanently forsworn politics, and works as the manager of a small textile factory.

DIGBY



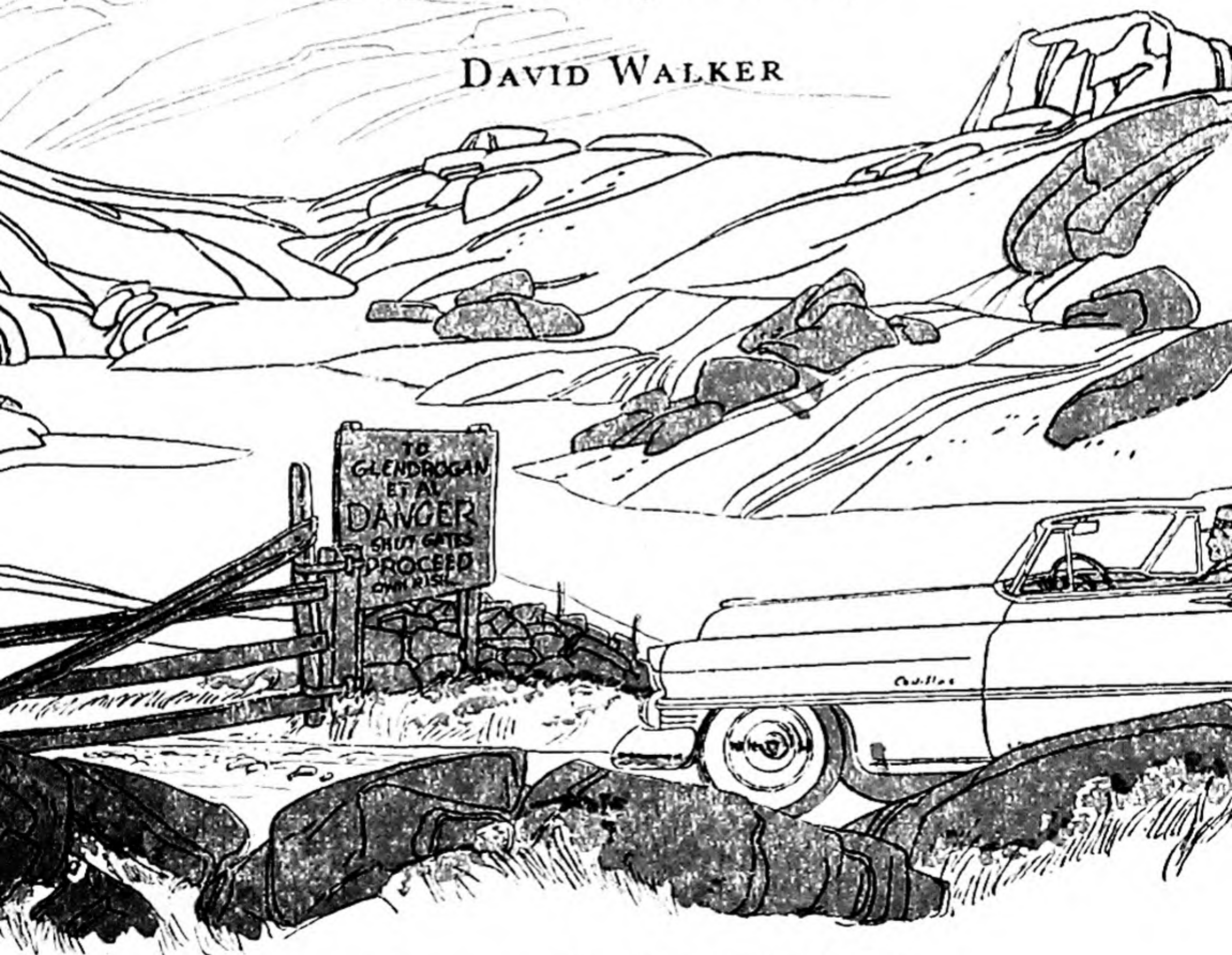
Illustrations by HOLMGREN

Digby

Pratap College
MADRAS

A condensation of the book by

DAVID WALKER



"Digby" is published by William Collins, London

WHAT happens when a respectable, tired American businessman escapes from home and office for a fling in the Highlands? Lots of things can happen—and most of them did happen to Digby P. Ross. First and most important, he met Fiona—the quite mad, entirely beautiful, infallibly seductive Highland Chieftain (female—*very* female). Then he met the Law—not as he used to meet it in the ordinary business of the Ross Corporation. And then he ran into Fiona's male counterpart, Lord Balgersho. What happened after that we will let Mr. Walker tell you.

This is a mad book—and an extremely funny one. When you read it, your troubles, like those of Digby P. Ross, will be dispelled by the Highland mist.

“A rippling, bubbling, vivacious, absurd story.”

—John Connell in the *Evening News*

“Genuinely funny, and roaring with gusto . . .”

—Marghanita Laski in *The Observer*



DIGBY P. ROSS SECOND was alone in a high room in the city. Above him were ceiling, roof garden, flagstaff, sky; below him thirty-two stories of the Ross Corporation.

He looked at the portraits of his late father and of Madeleine, at the Harvard group, at the air photo of his fishing camp in New Brunswick, at the Audubon prints, at the well-filled bookcase, at all the elegant unbusinesslike array which was the office of a most businesslike man. He saw the muted place with loathing.

What can it be? he thought. What is this sink of despair I'm falling into? What is the evil streak that finally got the better of me yesterday and made me shout abuse at my innocent secretary, and do something far worse than that? He picked up the paperweight now, and weighed it guiltily in his right hand.

And to think that in all my fifteen years of service to the corporation—impeccable service, I may justifiably say—I have never before even raised my voice. Then, yesterday Miss Prendergast was standing there in her horn-rimmed spectacles, so damned expectant and perfect and patient, that's the very thing that made me do it. . . . *Will you for heaven's sake not pester me?* CRASH.

He switched on the intercom on his desk. "Yes?"

"Mr. Jenks is calling from Wyoming—on the scrambler phone."

He dealt with Max Jenks, head man on the Atomic Energy Commission Construction Project, next to Digby himself probably the most important of the thirty-odd thousand servants of the Ross Corporation. *We are all servants*, Digby was wont to say, as his father had said before him. But he was a formidable master.

"Is the weather bad with you, Digby?" asked Mr. Jenks, at

length, as the president's courteous gloom came sagging over the long-distance wires.

"The temperature is ninety-six outside," Digby said. "And the humidity is ninety. Good-bye, Max."

The worst thing about it, he thought, is that I can't trust myself not to do it again. And do you realize I might have killed her?

Then I go out and spend four hundred and ninety-six dollars for an emerald diamond brooch in an agony of remorse and I come back and summon her tear-blotched from the Rest Room and I say: *Miss Prendergast, I owe you a sincere apology for my unpardonable behaviour. Please accept this small brooch as a measure and a token of my regret*, and she makes me pin the damnable thing on her bosom and she says *Oh it's lovely, Mr. Ross. It's the loveliest brooch. Why, it's just lovely*. Enough lovelies to drive a fellow crazy, and love, yes she loves me more than ever and the worst thing is that she says: *I'll wear it always*.

Well, she's wearing it today and she'll wear it every other day and any time I see it will be a reminder until I can't bear it. . . . And what of the drop of two points the company's stock took last week? Only one reason for it in a strong market: *I'm not sure about Ross Corporation. People say Ross himself has lost his grip. But he's only forty-one. I always heard he was the brightest guy in the whole American construction business. Yes, but there are plenty can't take it. He wouldn't be the first*. . . . And the shareholders—those thousands of good plain American men and women to whom I am responsible.

"Come in please, Miss Prendergast."

He looked at the rough notes he had made for his speech to the Boston Chamber of Commerce; then he looked at Miss Prendergast waiting in front of him, eyes downcast at her pad, as she had waited countless times in the five years of his presidency, a supremely efficient girl. Quite a nice-looking girl behind those glasses, he thought now. I never noticed before. Just another sign of a lost grip. He noticed also that her hands were trembling very

slightly. *She's scared of me.* And he was ashamed that the small sadistic corner of him relished that.

Shall I get her to take it? Or do it on the dictaphone? Now I can't even make my mind up. Digby strode over to the great window, and stared at New York. I used to love it. Now I hate it. I can't stand it a day longer.

"Miss Prendergast," he said. "I've decided to take three days' rest. Call Jake Doon at the camp and tell him I'm coming. Have the Grumman ready at three. Tell the members of the board. Tell Mrs. Ross, and say I'll be home for lunch. I'll give you a draft for the Boston speech at two o'clock. Get some six-pound nylon leader from Abercrombie's. All that as quickly as you can, please, and don't let anyone disturb me. I shall dictaphone a draft for the Secretary of Labour meantime; let me have it at two, please." This was all much terser than his habit.

"Yes, Mr. Ross."

He forced himself to smile at Miss Prendergast. "Thank you," he said.

She half turned to go, and then made a personal comment, a thing she hardly ever did. "I'm so glad you're taking a little vacation, Mr. Ross. You've been looking so . . . so sort of peaky lately."

Peak! he thought sourly. Who ever heard of a secretary telling her boss he looked *peaky*?

DIGBY let himself into the apartment. He was nervous. "Hullo there," he said, and kissed his wife's cheek.

"I do think it's selfish not to give me a little warning."

"I know, darling," he said. "I'm sorry. I suddenly realized that I need a few days' rest. It's this endless racket, and the heat.

"Why not come with me?" But the only time Madeleine had ever visited the camp, she made Jake fell trees to improve the vista, and complained so incessantly about black flies that Digby had the area sprayed with DDT, which killed thousands of trout.

"I can't possibly come, Digby. Surely you know I have an emer-

agency meeting of the Poets' Association tomorrow?" She sighed.

"Sorry," he said. "I forgot." But he was not sorry. Madeleine's idea of a busy life was one engagement, and the rest of the day to fill in with hair appointments and fittings and interesting poets of genius. He had never cared before; it was worth it to have her contented and so beautiful always. But lately it annoyed him.

He could guess what she said to her poets. *It's so sad for business people, losing themselves in Mammon. Now, take my Digby. He used to love poetry. But I can hardly get him to read a word nowadays except C. S. Forester and things like that.*

The contempt for what enabled her to be patroness to these long-haired leeches, that was the thing that made him resentful. That and her condescension to his poor utilitarian brains.

I must stop it, he thought. I really must stop thinking this way about Madeleine. Aloud, he was his courteous unprovocative self as he ate a hurried lunch, and when she helped him pack his bag. She always loved to do things for him; he was her man, her selfish man. So does Miss Prendergast like doing things for me; only she doesn't demand, complain, complain.

Suddenly his trouble with Miss Prendergast seemed smaller, even trivial—except for the quite unnecessary price he had paid for that brooch. But his unspoken troubles with Madeleine were not trivial. They were growing and growing after ten childless years of marriage with a wife nine years younger than himself—she was still only thirty-two. *You used to take me out dancing, darling, she said last week. And we had fun. But you seem so blue lately and you never want to do a thing except work and work even after dinner. . . . It's so dull and so unfair.*

I'm tired, Madeleine, I guess. Yes, it was unfair, and his fault, and he was forty-one—getting old. That must be why he was tired.

Olaf, the houseman, took down his bag.

Madeleine kissed him. "Have a nice time," she said. "And promise not to let that pilot fly in bad weather."

TWO EVENINGS later Digby sat with Jake Doon under the white pine. The weather had been fine, with a breeze to keep the flies down; they had taken their limit of trout on both days. He should be feeling better. He felt worse.

"See here, Dig," said Jake, mentioning it for the first time. "You were always a quiet kind of a guy, but as happy as the next man. This year you're different. You're mopey. You don't even strike a fish like you meant it. Whassamatter, Dig?" Jake rolled an inch or two back and an inch or two forward on his log.

Don't call me Dig. He wanted to shout that over the water. Nobody else ever called him Dig, but only old Jake who was his employee and his good friend—a plain sardonic New Brunswicker. "I don't know, Jake," he said. "I don't know what's the matter. Overwork, I guess."

"You workin' any harder than last year and the year before and the year before that?"

"Not much."

"Well, it ain't overwork then." Jake was a simple man. He knew everything Yes or No. He generally did, too. "Is it a blonde?"

"No," he said sourly. Madeleine was a brunette. It was Madeleine. It was all Madeleine's fault. "What did you say?"

"I said it's the groove you're in, if you ask me. It's never doing nothing different."

"Isn't this different?"

"Two days this trip, three the last, up and down in that damn plane. No sooner here than wantin' to be some other place. Restless as a skunk in springtime. There's your trouble, Dig."

"I wish you wouldn't call me Dig."

"Okay, Mr. Ross."

"Don't call me Mr. Ross."

Jake turned and stared at Digby in the gloaming. "Say!" he said. "You sure have got it bad."

"I know, Jake." Of all the people he employed, or had ever employed, Jake alone treated him without deference.

"Being in a rut's fine," Jake said gently. "A rut keeps a man contented till it gets too deep and he can't see out the thing. Did you ever take a month's vacation these last five years? Did you ever take more'n a week at a stretch?"

"No," said Digby. "But it's been a busy period and I have responsibilities. After all, I am the head of a great corporation."

Jake spat. Out in the lake a loon laughed, and soon another answered. Both were silhouetted against the western glow as they swam to a meeting. Ripples spread about, subsided. The loons faced one another, making uncanny loving sounds. It was too dark to see their formal antics. Mosquitoes hummed. It was time to go in. Jake was certainly surely inevitably going to say something infuriating. He did: "Daddy loon's head of a corporation."

That was going too far. He's my employee after all, Digby thought angrily. He stood up.

"No offence meant, Dig," said Jake. He sounded kind again, not being funny. "It's just that I don't like to see you down in the dumps, no more good to yourself than a chicken's teeth is to a chicken. You'll have to snap out of it some way."

They walked along the dark path to the cabin. "Perhaps I could take the whole of August," Digby said, half to himself. "I'll have to do something. But where? What? The fishing's no good then. If we go to Mount Desert, it'll be the same old gang. If we go to the Cape, it'll be worse. . . ."

Jake coughed. "It's none of my business, Mr. Ross," he said at the doorway with unusual diffidence, even embarrassment. "But whyn't you go alone? Make more of a change like."

"I wouldn't . . ." Digby began, but stopped himself. "Well, good night, Jake." They parted. It would be unthinkable to go away for that long without Madeleine. Damn Jake! he thought. Damned interfering fool! He's always had a grudge against Madeleine since she made him do some work around here for a change.

He went despairingly to bed. Tomorrow back to New York, back to Madeleine, back to work.

CHAPTER 2

NEXT AFTERNOON they had to fly a hundred miles out of course to avoid storms in Maine. Digby did not reach the apartment till seven-thirty.

"Anyone home? Are you there, Madeleine?"

"Yes," she called from the drawing-room.

She wore a short evening dress, shoulders bare, made of some silvery metallic-looking stuff, and he looked at her again with the old jolt of pleasure.

"I'm just going out, Digby," she said. "Miss Prendergast didn't tell me till noon that you were coming back tonight. It's too bad." She turned her mouth away as he bent to kiss her. "Don't muss me up, darling."

A cheek was not much of a welcome from your wife leaving right away for some party. Neither of them ever went out alone. Oh, well. "Where are you dining?"

"With the Bartletts. Craig Proctor is coming to fetch me."

"Who's Craig Proctor?" Digby poured himself a drink and sat down at the other end of the sofa.

"Do be careful of the brocade, Digby, in those dirty clothes. Craig Proctor is the author of *Picnic at Golgotha*, the new play everybody's raving about. He's charming."

"I don't think the name of his play is particularly charming."

Madeleine smiled. "Dear Digby," she said. "Did you catch lots of trout? And how was your quaint friend, Jake?"

"Jake was all right," he said. He felt a shiver start in the back of his head and run right down. He wanted to seize hold of Madeleine and rip the new Dior dress into shreds with that noise of tearing calico, not that it was calico. Going out, not wanting to be mussed up, dear Digby trying to talk of things intellectual, quaint Jake—now he felt a violent urge to show her who was master. He



had practised self-control all his life. He battled the primitive enemy. "What have you been doing with yourself, Madeleine?"

"It's been rather lonely without you," she said, looking at the nails of her right hand one by one. "Except that I've been so madly busy I haven't had a moment to think. Digby, you're very whiffy in that bush shirt. I can smell you from here."

Digby placed his long glass carefully on the little disk thing to stop puddles on the mahogany. He stood up, went round the table, put a hand on each of her bare shoulders and lifted her to her feet. He stared down at her. "So you can smell me," he said.

"Yes, I can." Surprised, perhaps a little scared, annoyed. "What's the matter?"

"This," he said. He clipped her into his arms. She turned her head away. He forced it up with his right hand. He kissed her by force on the lips. She struggled, then didn't struggle.

He let her go abruptly. "Digby!" she muttered, "Have you gone crazy?"

"You'd better fix your face," he said. "And I shall take a bath. See you later." He took his glass with him. He felt miles and miles better, and very much astonished with himself.

"You'll have to go to the club for dinner," she called. "I let Olaf and Helmut go out. Or you could cook yourself an egg."

He stopped. "Why did you let them go out?"

"Why? . . . Why?" In ten years of married life he had never spoken unkindly to her, far less criticized her management of their household. "Don't they have to have time off? You come back from your silly fishing trip without warning. . . ."

"You had plenty of warning," he interrupted coldly. "You could have made some arrangement. It's your only job, after all." The door bell rang. "There's the little author. You'd better let him in." Digby stalked through their bedroom into his bathroom and shut the door. The water gushed. . . . Oh Lord, he thought with horrible clarity. What have I done now? I told her it was her only job. I told her she was a housewife. She'll never forgive me for that.

DIGBY waited up for her. It was nine-thirty, ten, ten forty-two, still too early. He had worked at the Boston speech—no good, poured himself several drinks of bourbon—no good. He tried *The Wall Street Journal*—threw it away.

Then he remembered the book which, for something to look at in the plane—and it had been too bumpy—he had put that morning in his grip, an old Scotch sporting book he'd found in the cabin, *Highland Days*. How boring. Well, try anything, he told himself—unaware that a dull book could plant a lively seed.

It has long been the preoccupation and ambition of Highland sportsmen, he read, to kill a salmon in the river, to shoot a grouse upon the hill, to stalk a stag in the deer forest—to achieve these three several and separate feats within the compass of one day. This laudable aim of every would-be Nimrod is less easy of realization than might at first be supposed. True, the grouse is no rare prize. True, a shootable beast is likely to be in the corrie. True, the

salmon may be running fresh from the sea. But to account for all three between a single dawn and a single dusk—there, in the words of the poet—there's the rub. Still, it is safe to say that any Highland Laird of determination and skill can in the fullness of time achieve this feat, this hat-trick of the hunter. As for the double hat-trick, that is indeed a rare triumph of the chase—two salmon, a brace of grouse, two stags.

What kind of pompous language was that? But a strangely fascinating idea. Now, Angus, he would say to the wise old gillie, *how shall we try today? What is your advice? The stag first? Last?*

All his life Digby had built castles of the mind: the bold hero rescuing maidens, capturing thieves, braving fire and flood. Nobody, not even Madeleine, knew of these romantic fancies hidden in the prosaic, competent Digby; and indeed of late, such dreams had been few. But now that he had been rude to his wife and was awaiting his just deserts; now, unaccountably, he was off on a journey to the land of kilted Nimrods, the land of purple heather, the land where grown-up people said *hoots toots mon*, the land of bluebells and bonnie lassies, the land of his own sturdy unknown ancestors, the land of the hat-trick, of the double hat-trick. Bang—bang on the moor; bang—bang in the corrie, whatever a corrie might be; strike, strike, and two silver salmon grassed.

He came abruptly out of his reverie as the key slicked into the Yale lock. It was eleven thirty-six. The bottle was half empty. Heavens, he hadn't meant to take that much; and no effect whatsoever. He was morose. He was going to make a manly simple apology to Madeleine. A pause, and then the key turned.

"When shall we get together again?" Get together, indeed!

"Call me, why don't you, Craig?"

"Good night, Madeleine."

"Good night, Craig."

Digby stepped out of the library. He was wearing the velvet smoking jacket she said made him look so distinguished. "So you got back, darling."

"Yes." No Digby; no darling. She did not look at him. She tidied the papers on the hall table, then turned to their bedroom.

He wanted to say: *I'm sorry, Madeleine: please will you help me snap out of this thing, whatever it is.* But how could he in the face of this cold indifference?

"Darling," he said. "Can you come in the library just a minute? I want to say . . ."

"It's almost midnight. If you're going to tell me you're sorry, there's no need."

"Please, Madeleine. I don't often ask."

"Oh no," she said. "You never ask. You're much too perfect." But she came into the library.

"How was the party?"

"It was all right."

"Anybody interesting?"

"Yes. You wouldn't know most of them. Oh, and the Mannings were there of all unlikely people."

Tim Manning was Digby's personnel vice-president. He wasn't a bad guy. He lacked decision. His wife was terrible.

"I'm sorry for saying that about Olaf and Helmut, darling. I don't know what's got into me lately. Something just seemed to snap."

"I don't mind so much you being as cross as a bear or behaving like a little boy," Madeleine said. "But when you say *it's my only job after all*, to cook your supper, when I think of how I've struggled all these years to make your home, and the full life of my own I deny myself, and then you make out it's my duty to be a sort of slave for your comfort, and your pleasure if you feel like it."

"Please forgive me for being rude," he said. "I never meant it, and it won't happen again."

"Then you attack me like a wild beast!"

But he was not sorry about that. Oh no, no. That was altogether different; a great pity he hadn't been beastly long ago. Steady! The tickle in his head was starting again.

"I've been thinking, Madeleine," he said hastily. "I've been

thinking that I must take a real vacation this year." He hurried to tell her his startling idea of twenty minutes ago before it palled into a ridiculous notion. "You remember I've spoken of my father's cousin, Mona Ross, who married a man called Galbraith in some English Army outfit in India. Well, he had a country place in Scotland where they went back to live and she's dead, of course, but he's alive the last I heard, and I've been thinking it's no good my taking a vacation on this side with the usual gang and within reach of the office. What I need is a real change, and you're tired, too, darling, so what I'm saying is, why not cable this Galbraith guy and ask if he can put us up for a few days, and we might take one of the cars with us and drive around the country. We could spend the whole of August together. August would be best." Digby realized that this jumbled waterfall of words was utterly unlike his usual measured delivery.

Madeleine stared at him in astonishment. "Scotland!" she said. "Why, that's a barbarous country. I believe the food is even worse than England—bannocks and haggis and porridge, and those self-righteous prigs of people. Europe would be different. But Scotland!" She looked at Digby with genuine horror.

"Scotland is such a beautiful country, everyone says." He did want to persuade Madeleine. "The home of Walter Scott and Burns and John MacNab!"

"The one wrote the dullest novels, and the second was only a lustful ploughman. I've no idea who the third was."

"He was a famous Buchan character," said Digby with mounting resentment. "And why shouldn't a lustful ploughman be a poet, if I may ask?"

"You may ask, and he can try. I'm sorry, Digby, I wouldn't dream of going to Scotland."

Madeleine smiled. She had not forgiven him and she would not forgive him. "I'm going to bed."

"I shall go alone in that case," Digby said. Decisions had never been difficult for him. He made this fateful one very easily.

"Why go alone?" she said softly, viciously.

What was this?

"Why go alone?" Madeleine repeated. "Why not take Miss Prendergast?"

"*Miss Prendergast?* But I have no business interests over there. What would I want Miss Prendergast for?"

"That was what I wondered when I heard this evening about the brooch you gave her from Cartier's. Emeralds and diamonds, wasn't it? What a charming present to give a secretary. What a lucky secretary! It's the joke of the office, Elise says. They wonder why you were so obvious about it."

"Wait, Madeleine! I can explain." He hated all scheming gossiping vengeful women. "Not that there's anything to explain. I was unpardonably rude to Miss Prendergast the other morning. So I brought her the booch, bought her the brooch." Damn! He went close to Madeleine. She retreated.

"A thousand dollars or so does seem a generous apology, particularly when Miss Prendergast is paid an enormous salary to endure your little outbursts. That's her job, isn't it? That's my job, too—unpaid—as you said earlier this evening."

"It wasn't anything like a thousand," Digby said. "Besides Miss Prendergast gives me most devoted exemplary service. She never nags me, never complains. She is wholeheartedly jobbed up in her wrap." Dear God, he thought. What's happening now? But he was too angry and too proud to correct himself.

Madeleine smiled. "Ermine, I suppose. I can't say I admire your taste. Of course, she may look better without her spectacles."

A vivid image of Miss Prendergast without spectacles crossed Digby's inner eye. "Are you crazy?" he said slowly. "Surely you know there's nothing whatsoever between Miss Prendergast and me." Why had he spent all that money on her? Why hadn't he realized she would show it off, and those women, all those damned women, would gossip, and some fool like Tim Manning would tell his wife? I'll break Manning, he thought. *I'll break him.*

"I know nothing about you," Madeleine said. "All these years you pretend to be patient and everyone says dear Digby, so nice and kind, such a model husband. Then suddenly you show your true colours. You make a laughing stock of me; you treat me like a slave; you assault me; you get drunk."

"I'm as sober as a lord," Digby said. But unaccountably and all of a sudden he was under the influence of drink for the first time since college days. Alcohol was storming at his tormented brain. Drunk as a judge. He glared at his wife. "You're a spoiled, selfish, stupid little woman," he said clearly, losing the last vestiges of self-control. "Thank heaven you're not my secretary." He advanced upon Madeleine. He would show her. Yes, he would.

She fled across the hall, slammed the bedroom door in his face, locked it. Digby ran to the entrance through the dressing-room, just too late, the other key turned, too. He shook the handle. "Let me in!" he hollered.

"You're a drunken beast," cried Madeleine from the other side. "You've wrecked my life. I've seen it coming for a long time. Well, this is the end. I shall leave you tomorrow."

Digby's house had toppled. The world and a wife may view the peccadilloes of a sinner with indulgence. But to a paragon who shows feet of clay, the world and a wife are merciless.

He lay in the narrow bed in his dressing-room. How could he face the morrow? How could he endure those leers in the office? What was this evil streak which, just now, a little while ago, had made him want to beat his wife, to hurt her? Poor Madeleine! Poor plain Miss Prendergast who meant nothing to him, never had and never would. Poor me! he thought. Poor sodden wreck. Another one who couldn't take it. He drifted into fume-ridden sleep.

By some vicious trick of the subconscious, his dull secretary was changed to a creature of delight. She sparkled in gems and nothing else. A salmon hung by the gills from one hand; she held a grouse in the other; she stood beside the corpse of a noble stag. *The hat-trick*, she said. *Oh, Mr. Ross!*

CHAPTER 3

ANGER leads to insult, and insult to a locked door which leads nowhere good. But in the case of Digby Ross a locked door did lead him to adventure.

He was a whole-hearted man, and he set about the preparations for his vacation with fanatical efficiency. He cabled Colonel Galbraith, received an answer, shipped the Cadillac, briefed the executive vice-president, booked air-passage, delivered the Boston speech, and did many other things with the help of Miss Prendergast.

If the brooch was still an office jest, no one smiled about it in Digby's presence. From an amiable and competent executive afflicted with melancholy, he changed overnight into a cold courteous tyrant. At the age of forty-one he made a startling discovery—that he did not give a damn what anyone thought of him, always excepting Madeleine. He wrote her at Bar Harbour, a simple letter of regret and apology, but received no answer. When a columnist asked meaningfully if gifts outside the family were the cause of a rift between the construction tycoon and his poetic lady, so long held out as models of domestic bliss, Digby took even this in his stride, and made a point of lunching at the club that same day.

He also sent for Tim Manning. "I understand you have been spreading malicious gossip about me," he said without preliminaries to that startled gentleman. "To be specific, I understand you told your wife that I had given my secretary an expensive brooch, and you said, with slanderous implications, that it was a good joke in the office. Did you?"

"Why, Digby," Manning stammered. "Why, if I ever mentioned such a thing I certainly didn't intend . . ."

"Listen to me," said the new Digby. "I will not tolerate disloyalty at any level in our organization. I made you personnel vice-president last year. I have not been satisfied with your work.

Unless there is a most noticeable improvement, I shall break you without the slightest compunction. Thank you for coming in."

Mr. Manning tottered from the office.

Old Randall Johnson, the chairman of the board, came to see Digby on the last morning before he left. "Well, young man," he said; he had been a friend of Digby's father. "I hear you've been making things hum around here; I hear pretty well everybody's nursing an ulcer. What's got into you?"

"Nothing, Randall," said Digby. "There were a few things I wanted to straighten out before leaving for Europe."

"Have yourself a good time, then," said Randall. "If there's ever anything I can do, you only have to tell me. That Madeleine's a fine girl." It was none of his business. He could not say more.

"Thank you, sir. I do appreciate your saying that."

"I hope you enjoy Scotland. The only time I was there it never stopped raining. Well, my boy, forget all about us. You deserve a vacation if anyone ever did. Furthermore, I think it'll do you good to get right away on your own. You've been the blue-eyed boy living a sheltered life since the day you were born." Typical of old Randall, and Digby took it from him.

Lastly Miss Prendergast, wilted with overwork and summer heat. I ought to say I'm sorry for driving her so hard, Digby thought. But he said nothing of the kind.

"Your air-ticket, Mr. Ross. Your passport. The traveller's cheques. The automobile forms. The heavy baggage receipts. The international driving licence. The Cadillac will be waiting at Prestwick Airport tomorrow morning. I think that's everything."

She stared across the table at Digby sadly like an office mother. "Do be careful at first about driving on the wrong side of the road, and I hope you have a lovely time, Mr. Ross." Lovely! he thought sourly. Lovely's her word. She's wearing her lovely brooch.

"When does your own vacation start?"

"Next week, Mr. Ross. I'm going with friends. We plan to drive through Maine and . . ."

He did not hear the itinerary. What kind of friends? He was wondering. Men friends or women friends? "I'll send you a post card from Scotland," he said, then realized he did not know her first name. Think of not knowing her name after all this time. She always signed her little typed notes with a plain P. "What's your first name so it'll be sure to reach you?"

Miss Prendergast blushed all over down to the visible limit of her neck. Her eyelids drooped hugely grotesquely coyly behind thick lenses. It was rather sweet and touching. "Frances," she said. "Frances Amelia Prendergast, Mr. Ross."

"Frances is a very pretty name," Digby said. He knew that this ordinary remark would become another of her sacred possessions; he was well aware that Miss Prendergast was abjectly in love with him. He had an absurd quixotic impulse to break yet another canon of his life and give her a kiss right here in the office. Quixotry or cruelty? He decided against it.

"Au revoir then, Miss Prendergast. You are a great strength and comfort to me." It's just as well she doesn't know about that dream.

CHAPTER 4

THE Cadillac was waiting the next day at the airport in Prestwick. Digby drove in the afternoon by way of Perth, Dunkeld, Pitlochry, into the real Highland country where heather was in bloom, and small sheep scuttled from the road, and men and girls on low-slung bicycles pedalled grimly uphill.

Digby had been reading books. He had expected houses of grey stone and white-washed cottages; he had expected bareness and the glow of hill and valley; he had expected a melodious bickering of grouse. But he was not prepared for immensity—for hills piled one on the other in every direction, an accumulation of small mountains making a vastness he had never seen in New England.

The afternoon had turned fine, clouds were dark in sunlight,

and Digby cruised north in his green Cadillac with the top down, passing crammed buses, toy cars, cyclists and more cyclists and explosive motor bikes.

He wondered again about his host, about this Colonel Galbraith who was his cousin-in-law, and who had replied so strangely to Digby's polite cable: BRING VIRGINIA HAM SCOTCH WHISKY GALBRAITH. Terse, explicit, but somewhat lacking in finesse, somewhat rude. Was this typical of Scottish hospitality? Did you pay board and lodging when you visited your cousin's husband? And why whisky in the land of whisky? It rang a warning bell. They're out to plunder me; they'll fleece me because I'm an American.

Nevertheless the Cadillac's capacious trunk was full of ham, whisky and other good things. I shall hand over only a little at first, Digby thought wisely, in case this Galbraith turns out to be an intolerable miserly drunken old glutton.

He drove along a valley through small grey towns, past hillsides lately stripped of lumber, past young plantations. In the wild and sombre barrier of mountains in the distance snow lingered in gullies on August tenth after the height of summer.

He came to the signpost. *To Glendrogan Et Al. Danger. Shut Gates. Proceed Own Peril.* Digby read this alarming notice several times. Danger from wild animals? From kilted men with guns? A dangerously steep and twisty road?

He drove slowly on, climbing out of the main valley, then round a shoulder, hooting carefully, into steep descent. Here was a different country altogether, a miniature valley crisscrossed by a foaming river, ending abruptly in a hill-face a mile ahead.

He came to a gate in a wall of loose grey stone. Digby got out to open it. He was confronted on the other side by a herd of the most ferocious cattle he had ever seen. Their coats were tremendously shaggy, horns menacingly wide and straight. Their eyes gleamed through hairy mantles with what seemed fanatical interest. They could hardly be less than bulls, although the hirsuteness made that a matter of conjecture. He understood the danger notice.

"Steady!" he said to himself as he went back to the car. He drove through, and now these monstrous animals clustered round him. They stared with lowered heads, jaws not moving. Any moment, he felt certain, they would charge the Cadillac and make mechanical mincemeat of it.

But Digby had courage. "Good bulls," he said soothingly, "good moo-cows eating Scotch grass for supper" as he walked to the gate and clanged it shut, ready to leap over when the attack came. One mooed loudly, and the sound rolled round the narrow valley. That's the signal! he thought. Now they're going to charge! But he walked back for the good name of America, and reached the driver's seat safely. Four of the creatures barred the road. "Shoo!" shouted Digby, "scram, you ugly beasts"—using, in his relief, expressions quite alien to him. They paid no attention whatsoever. He inched his way forward to touch them, to push them gently, to push them harder. The car stalled. Tawny silent bulls surrounded him. One put out a slavery tongue to lick the mirror. There was only one thing to do. Digby sounded a long blast on the horn. One moment hairy monsters close on every side; the next a rampaging stampede. They took off in every direction; a hoof clanged on the glossy flank of the Cadillac. "Oh, dear," Digby said. It was an ugly dent, a bad beginning. He wiped his brow, wondering what would be the next thing.

But nothing else happened, and he came to the abrupt hill-face. There was a river junction and a bridge. One ancient signpost said Balgersho, and a road swung left along that river under the hill. The other and newer sign said Glendrogan. He followed the narrower, deeper, darker river to the right. At once he was in a gorge, desolate and forbidding. Digby was sensitive to atmosphere. He felt instantly that there was murder in the air of this defile, where wickedness had happened and would happen again. He heard a croaking. Far above him a dark bird swung—the raven, bird of ill omen. He sighed. He wondered if he would love this grim country or hate it. He drove on above the turbulent river.

Abruptly the gorge widened to a glen between high hills. There was a second gate, then a third, no more cattle but black-faced sheep, and lambs already past an endearing infancy, still butting for their mother's milk. Blue hares lolloped across the heather, sat up on hindquarters to watch the car. It could not be far now to Glendrogan. The time was six o'clock. Digby had seen no human being and no habitation in these last miles.

"Hey!" Was that a shout? "Hey!" again. He stopped. The two men were directly under him. One of them waved, then went on fishing. He was a short man in a kilt, bald and heavily moustached. His companion wore a bright-checked knickerbocker suit and hat. Both were again absorbed in the river. They did not look again at Digby. He waited in the car. Was this Colonel Galbraith, his host? Cousin Mona had once sent a snapshot from India in which she towered over a bald square husband beside a dead tiger. It could be. Now the Colonel, if it was he, reeled in his line. Both turned and picked their way from rock to rock upstream again.

"That's the best of it," he called. "You Ross?" a peremptory bellow above the tumbling rush of water.

"Yes," Digby replied. He waited a long moment while the two of them climbed the bank.

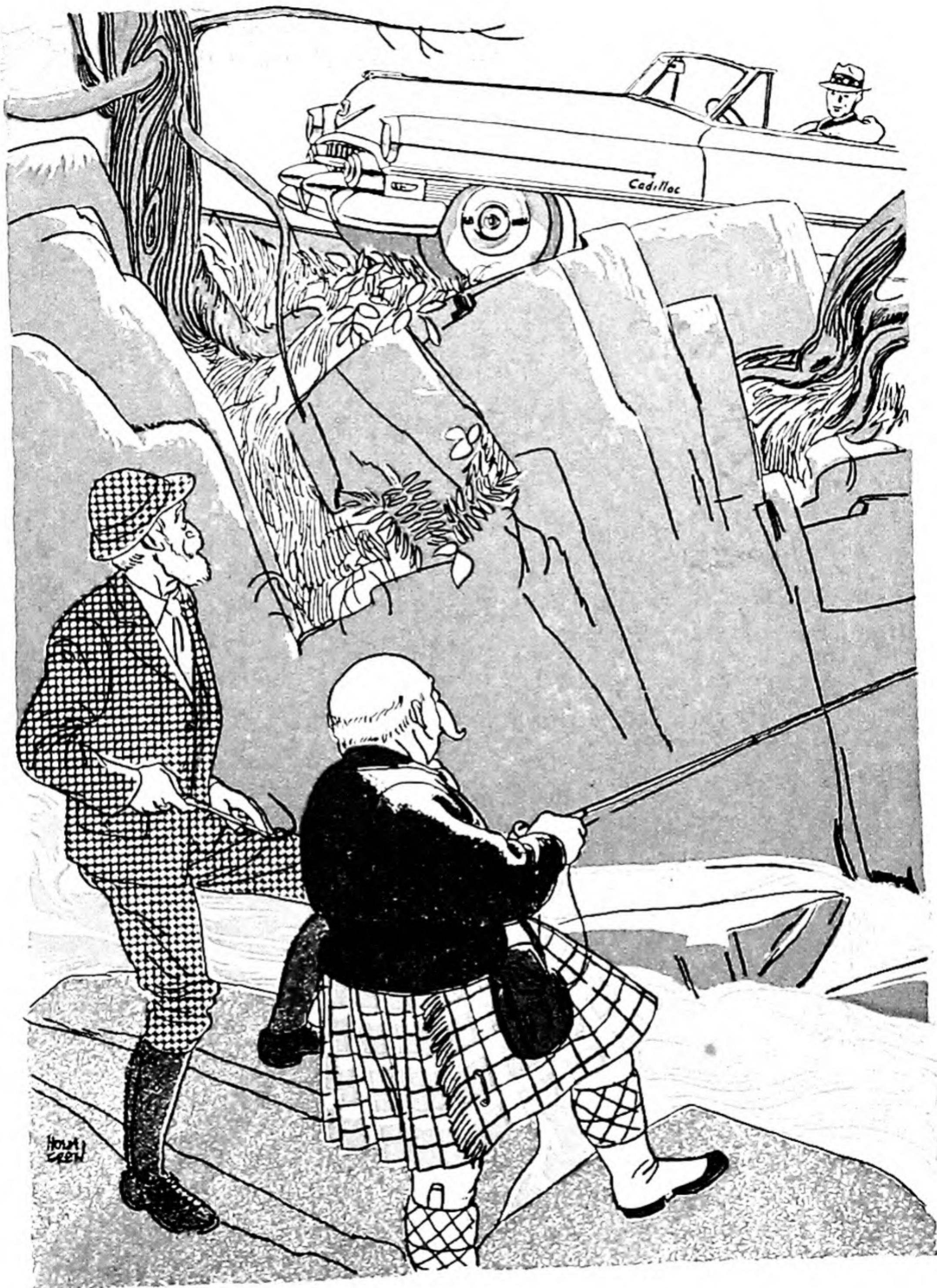
"I'm Galbraith," said the Colonel, shaking hands vigorously. "I thought you must be him in that enormous barouche. The river's up a foot since this morning, but nothing doing. Well, how are you? Did you fly from America last night?"

"Yes," said Digby.

"How about that, MacLagan?" The Colonel turned to his companion. "What d'you think of that? Back home in God's country one evening, and here the very next. Not bad going, eh?"

"It's a sign of the age, I'm thinking," remarked Mr. MacLagan. He was a portentously handsome man.

"This is MacLagan, my head stalker, gillie, general *bête noire* and God knows what not. MacLagan, this is Mr. Ross. Digby P., isn't it, as you people like to be called. What does the P. stand for?"



"How d'you do, Mr. MacLagan," said Digby, escaping the Colonel's barrage. "This is fine country."

"It is so," said MacLagan, shaking hands. "Would Mr. Ross be making his first visit to the Highlands?"

"Yes," Digby said. It was his first visit, and a first meeting, a strange meeting—dark river, stark mountains, slick automobile, machine-gun Colonel, Highland patriarch, all in a brief unbelievable twenty something hours from New York, which he had not yet left behind.

"Let's get cracking, then," said the Colonel. "We might try the Piper's for a minute on the way up. Hop in the back, MacLagan."

MacLagan seated himself with dignity in the back of the Cadillac. They drove up the wooded glen in silence until the Colonel said, "Here we are," at a pool below fast water. "Can you fish, Digby P.?"

Digby once had fished unsuccessfully for salmon on the Grand Cascapedia, but that was from a canoe and all he had caught were slinks. "I can try," he said, excited at being given a chance immediately like this. "But I know nothing about salmon."

"That's a relief," said the Colonel. "You take him, MacLagan. I shall watch from this gilded chariot."

Digby went with his mentor to the water's edge. It was a small pool, dark and quiet; you could imagine salmon teeming in the depths.

"There's just the one chance at this height of water," MacLagan said. "See the swirl of yon rock?"

The swirl was in midstream, a break in the smoothness of surface, but the rock was submerged. "Yes."

"If there's a fish in the pool, that's where he'll be today. But a poor chance for Mr. Ross after the Colonel's been over the water. We'll try the Blue Charm."

Digby's heart began to thump. Suddenly he was all here, and no part of him remained in his native land. He was absolutely certain that there would be a salmon and he would hook it. He

had often had such hunches before about other things and they had come to nothing, but this would come to something. He knew it. He started above the rock. The big two-handed rod was stiff.

He took one step, two, watching the line swing across above the rock into slack water. A third step, a fourth, and this time he could just see the fly skid through that tiny dip downstream of the rock. Nothing happened.

But at the sixth step something did happen. The line checked, was still for a moment: then it tightened. There was a mild tug. "What is it?" said Digby. Surely not a salmon.

"You're into a fish," said MacLagan. "Strike as soon as you feel him. Just firm."

Another tug. Digby raised the point of his rod, not quite believing. Then he believed. The line cut a spraying V across the pool, swung downstream, reel screaming, slack again.

"Take in," cried MacLagan.

Digby reeled in as fast as he was able. "Bravo!" It was the Colonel approaching.

The salmon made a second run. "Be easy on him," said MacLagan.

"Be firm," wheezed the Colonel. "Keep him in the pool."

"He'll no leave the pool."

"Yes, he will. Keep the point of the rod up. Fight him!"

"Let him wear himself out," cried MacLagan. "Man, you'll break him. Be easy now."

This diametrically opposite advice from two experts confused Digby utterly. As a result, he was hard or easy on the fish according to the latest words of command. The last order before disaster came unfortunately from Colonel Galbraith: "Let the fish know who's master," he shouted.

Digby determined to be master. Just at that moment, the salmon jumped like a silvery bow three feet clean out of the water, cork-screwing for liberty.

"Point down!" shouted both men in agonized agreement.

But Digby was still being master. The line twanged, the salmon splashed, and all was limply silent.

"The Currnel aye knows best," said MacLagan with bitterness. "A twenty-pounder." He took the rod from Digby, reeled in and stumped off alone along the bank.

"Now he's in a huff," said the Colonel. "Old idiot. You have to be firm on them, Digby P. I don't hold with this velvet-glove nonsense. But *always* drop the point of your rod when a fish jumps. Well, never say die. Better luck next time. Now we'll go home." He raised his voice. "Come on, MacLagan!"

MacLagan muttered, but came. He seated himself once more in the back seat and stared fixedly across the glen. He was extraordinarily Biblical and forbidding.

Digby had been kicked in the car by a Highland bull, had lost a salmon, had innocently caused a quarrel between master and man. If this old gasbag of a Colonel hadn't interfered . . . his sympathies were entirely with MacLagan. But he did not feel disappointment. He felt exhilarated. He breathed deeply. "Wonderful air you have," he said, driving along the narrow road.

"Bit chilly now," said the Colonel. "Of course I admit my blood's thin after twenty-two hot weathers in the plains."

What plains does he mean? Oh, the plains of India. They do get around, these people, Digby thought enviously, not knowing that he would soon be heartily sick of the plains of India. He pressed a button. The windows whined up.

"Jumping Jehosophat," cried Colonel Galbraith. "Up go the windows at the pressing of a pip. The thing starts itself, gears itself, winds itself, drives itself. Where is the radar, that's what I want to know? And the death ray? Is it atomic, this dreadnought, this New World monster?" He bounced gleefully on his seat and turned: "What d'you think of that, MacLagan?"

MacLagan did not give. "Hummmmm," he remarked.

"This is a good road," Digby said.

"Fair. Why wouldn't it be?"

"I expected something much worse after the notice back there at the highway."

"Oh, that! That's my dodge to keep the trippers out. There's a right of way you know, but they're a perfect damned nuisance leaving the gates open and paper all over the place and bonfires and embracing in plain view. So I discourage them—one, by the notice; two, by Highland cattle. Did you encounter the creatures?"

"Yes," Digby said. "They barred the way. In fact I stalled the car against several of them."

"They stalled this Juggernaut? Impossible. Why, they're the most phlegmatic, amiable oxen, totally belying their appearance. They long to be patted and petted. What happened then?"

"I blew the horn, and they stampeded. One kicked the car." Colonel Galbraith peered over to look at the dent. He lay back and shook speechlessly with merriment. What an unattractive little man, Digby thought. With that absurd twitching vaudeville moustache! He had taken a dislike to Colonel Galbraith.

"Turn up here."

Digby turned into massive gates and along a drive flanked by rhododendrons. "Stop. This is MacLagan's mansion."

Digby drew up. "Home again," said the Colonel. "Time for a noggin. High time for your lemonade, MacLagan."

Digby got out and pulled forward his seat to let MacLagan disembark with the salmon rod, fishing bag and gaff. "Mr. Ross did well," he said, inclining his head slightly and touching his hat. He did not look at his employer. "Good night, Mr. Ross."

Digby said good night. They drove yet farther.

"MacLagan's a rabid teetotaller," said the Colonel, "and a conceited dogmatic old humbug. But he knows his stuff, I must admit. I hope you can take your drink like a man, Digby P."

"I hope so," Digby said. Digby P.! Was that to be his fate?

They arrived at Glendrogan House. It was long and rambling, built of sandstone. It stood against a hill and faced south across the valley. Lawns, flower-beds, pines, copper beech, croquet hoops,

rock garden. They stopped in a swish of gravel. There was one other car, minute and ancient. "Ho, ho," said Galbraith. "The Queen is with us. Come to sponge supper, I'll bet."

The front door opened. An exceedingly plain girl appeared. She bulged dumpily in kilt and sweater.

"Come and shake hands with Digby P.," commanded the Colonel. She obeyed, staring unwaveringly. "This is m'daughter, Elspeth."

"I'm delighted to meet you," Digby said with his infallible courtesy, but inwardly he thought: Can they all be this plain?

The girl shook hands dumbly. She was the spitting image of the Colonel—but with a head of mousy hair, no moustache, no animation.

"Ah, and here's the Queen of the Highlands."

Digby had been about to say conventional things to Miss Galbraith when the word Queen for the second time struck into him. The Queen of England was Queen of the Highlands, wasn't she? Surely she wouldn't sponge supper? Still, you never knew with these crazy people. Quite mad, he was thinking already. "I've asked you before not to call me that," said a contralto voice irritably.

Digby turned.

They were not all plain. He saw before him a girl, a woman, of unimaginable beauty. His romantic heart had sounded loud at the prospect of a salmon. At this prospect it beat a thunderous tattoo.

CHAPTER 5

DIGBY stared. It was true, as old Randall Johnson had said yesterday morning in a different world, that his life had been sheltered. Not that Digby was a prude exactly. But if temptation had murmured a few times in his ear, there had always been Madeleine near at hand, far more attractive than any other woman.

Now Madeleine was thousands of miles away, estranged from

him; he was in an alien land at the age of forty-one, far from the myriad shackles of decorum. In the twinkling of an eye, before he had even said how d'you do, he was seized by passion.

The girl, the Queen of the Highlands as she did not like to be called, wore a kilt of gold and green and scarlet, the same colours as the dawn this morning. Her height was medium. Her hair was an unruly mane of auburn. Her face and neck and limbs were finely tanned. Her shoulders were broad, her hips curved slimly, her waist an isthmus. Her green sweater was a clarion call. At the extremities of long legs she wore golden socks and stout black brogues. At her throat, the visible apex of isosceles, was a great Highland brooch, a circle of silver fully four inches across, and in the centre of that a noble stag, standing broadside.

She stared back at Digby from green eyes, her nose tilted at the tip, her mouth wide, generous, full-lipped.

All this cyclone, this revelation, in a few seconds on deep gravel outside Glendrogan House in the County of Crummockshire, Scotland. The Colonel was speaking: "M'sister's gel," he said. "Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks, Chief of Clan Kilburnie, Hereditary Keeper of the Royal Stags, et cetera, in fact Mistress of all she surveys. Fiona, my poppet, this is Mr. Digby P. Ross of New York City, my dear wife's cousin once removed. The P.'s a secret, isn't it, Digby P.?"

Yes, the P. was a secret, damn the little man. They shook hands, and a thousand volts shot up his arm and stormed his system.

"How did you come, Mr. Ross?" Her voice rose and fell over the few words.

I've waited all my life to hear that music, that Highland song. "I came by plane," Digby said. How else would I come to lay my eyes on you? How else but on the magic carpet of the air?

"Did you have a good crossing?"

"Yes," he said. "It's wonderful flying to meet the dawn miles and miles up there above the clouds."

"I believe you're quite a poetic sort of chap," said the Colonel. "A poet from the land of plumbing. Well, come on in and let's

have a peg. I hope you brought some whisky. We can hardly buy the stuff here because of dollars for the English."

"I did bring some," Digby said, feeling a little more kindly to the Colonel who thought him poetic; or a little less unkindly. "Shall I get a case out now?"

"No, no, young feller. Later will do. Come inside and find your room. Where did you put him, Elspeth?"

"The Blue Room," said Elspeth Galbraith. She seemed almost mute, but was sturdy. She swung two suitcases out of the back of the car and led the way into the house. Digby brought the others. The Colonel carried the briefcase. Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks did not carry anything.

"After you," Digby said. Languorous, lazy-limbed, indolently gliding. Oh, goodness gracious. Could such a vision be this Colonel's niece? He followed her into the hall.

It was a large and gloomy room, entirely dedicated to the chase. Ruffed stags with mighty antlers stared down from every wall, there were salmon in glass cases, stuffed birds, paintings of deer, of wild duck and geese. Digby went through the hall after Elspeth, and along a cold stone passage, upstairs, another corridor, another. "Blue Room," she said finally, putting down suitcases. "Bath's at the other end." Elspeth departed.

Digby was alone. Events, impressions, thoughts, stirrings piled confusedly upon him. He looked out of the window at a patch of heather; he observed a chilly jug and basin; he noticed the four-poster bed and awful wallpaper; he opened a suitcase and brushed his hair. Fiona, he thought desperately again and again. What's happened to me? I've only seen the girl for one minute. How old is she? Around thirty. It's absurd nonsense. I must take a grip.

He went out, along, downstairs, along, round the corner, through the tangily dead-smelling crepuscular hall towards a room where the Colonel's voice and *that* voice sounded.

"I can always let it."

"My dear girl, you'll never let that great barn of a place, not on

your life, not even to a rich Amer . . . oh, here's Digby P., clothed and in his right mind, and found the way first go off. It's a maze, this joint, but nothing to Fiona's palace, which reminds me of the time I was staying at the Viceroy's House in Delhi, that white elephant, although some people say it's very fine. Well, I mistook left for right, or the west wing for the east wing. I tripped interminable miles along corridors and upstairs and finally into my door. What should I see but the Vicereine fast asleep in a pink nightgown in the middle of the morning. She did not stir, fortunately. Help yourself to a chota peg, Ross." The Colonel waved his hand at a tray of drinks.

Digby poured himself Scotch and soda, which might be a chota peg for all he knew.

He glanced once at Miss Kilburnie who reclined or lay in a deep arm-chair with whisky in her hand. She was watching him. No, he had not been mistaken. Queen of the Highlands, voluptuous Queen, unbearable. He looked away and sat down and pulled himself together. Elspeth was knitting a green sweater, knitting so fast that Digby could see the thing grow in a clicking of needles and a flying of blunt fingers. After a while Elspeth arose, went over to Fiona, laid the embryo sweater across the back of her shoulders—it exactly matched the sweater she was wearing—returned to her chair and continued to knit until her father said: "Go and get dinner." She went out of the room.

At dinner. "Do you have deer in America, Mr. Ross?" So simply, so sweetly, so wisely, like *do you have people in America, Mr. Ross?*

"Why, yes," he said. "They're mostly in the woods, though."

"And mooses? Huge things, aren't they?"

"Not many mooses now," he said. "Yes, huge things."

"I thought the plural was moose," said the Colonel.

"So it is," Digby said. He could scarcely stand this sitting beside her; he ate practically nothing. Out of the corner of his eye he saw her tucking heartily into venison—from cold storage, the Colonel explained. A lovely disturbing appetite of health and beauty.

"You eat like a horse, Fiona," said Galbraith.

"Don't be rude, Uncle Farquhar." Her eyes flashed; then her anger passed like a summer cloud.

"Is your home near here?" Digby asked. He still did not know if she was Miss Kilburnie, or Lady or Duchess or Countess or Princess or what.

"Yes," pointing gracefully with her table knife across the valley to high hills in evening sunlight. "That's the beginning of Kilburnie land."

"Fifty thousand acres fit for nothing," Galbraith said. He sneered all over his purple face. He was outrageous.

"It's better'n yours, Uncle Farquhar," she snarled. "It's not just all plain bog."

"Fancy bog," said the awful Colonel. "Everybody finished? Let's go outside. Wash up, Elspeth. We shall need you for croquet later."

The three of them sat on a wooden seat beside the croquet lawn. Digby was tired. He listened to grouse calling on the hill behind. What a sound of wild untrammelled freedom. "It's a night for the wee people," Fiona breathed, as quietly as a secret.

"Don't forget you're shooting with me the day after tomorrow, Fiona," the Colonel said. "Can you shoot, Digby P.?"

"Not well," he said.

"You're a modest chap. Said you couldn't fish, but you cast a fair line, not a bad line at all, in fact. I shall put you in the end butt. My invariable rule. Then you're less likely to kill somebody. I remember one time we were shooting near Delhi, and some Yankee tourist feller got wished on us. Know what he did? Shot his duck boy in the bare brown backside. Can you beat that? Ha, ha, ha!" The Colonel laughed immoderately.

"Was the boy badly hurt?" Digby, humanist, made himself speak mildly.

The Colonel shrugged. "I dunno. They carted him off on a charpoy. We got three hundred and forty-eight head that day, not bad going."

The evening was still and the air heavy. A pigeon sat on an oak nearby. Coo-cooo, coo-cooooo-coo, it cooed slumberously, then launched itself, climbed in a blatter of wings, hung, glided lovingly, and repeated the performance for some other pigeon's benefit. Fiona sighed. Elspeth arrived from washing up.

"Croquet," said the Colonel. "Fiona, you and I will take the others on. I suppose you play, Digby P.?"

"Once upon a time," Digby said, remembering games on Long Island with his father who used to say it was good practice in self-control. How long ago can that be? Thirty years. Getting old. I did feel old; now I feel as young as ever but no time to lose.

It was soon apparent why Colonel Galbraith had chosen Fiona for his partner. She played a brilliant swashbuckling game, a delight to watch. Digby and Elspeth dragged along behind. The Colonel hit his red ball almost through a hoop. He ran the flat of his mallet down the back, moving, yes indubitably moving the ball on. "Well, that's through all right," he said, made a croquet on Elspeth's ball, took croquet and sent it over the edge, down the bank and into the rhododendrons. "You have to play from there," he remarked. "Local rule."

Digby went down with Elspeth to find it and play back. "My father is completely dishonest," she said, making her longest speech of the evening.

The second game was nearly over when the sound of a light plane droned up. "Ah-hah," the Colonel said. "Hark to that! The bold bad baron, I'll wager."

It was a blue monoplane, flying very low in the valley, turning this way. "Who's that?" Digby asked. A plane was the last thing he expected to see at peaceful improbable acrimonious Glendrogan.

"It's that stinker, Balgersho," spat Fiona. She threw her mallet away and stood with hands on hips, shoulders square, bosom heaving mountainous defiance. She did not hold the pose long, however, for the plane rose to a stall, much as the pigeon had done earlier, hovered, then dived with roaring engine at the croquet

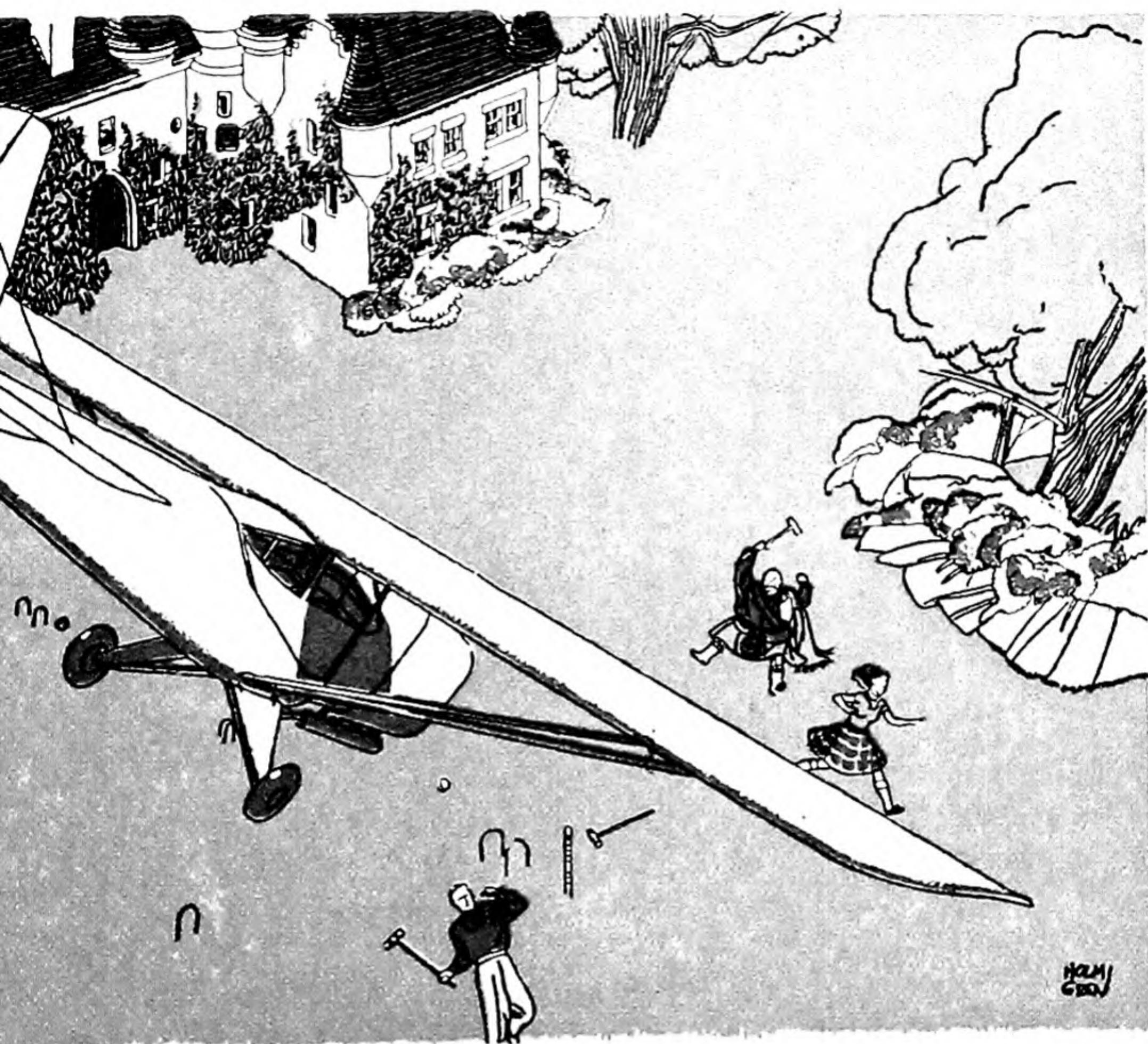


lawn. They lay down. "Bloody young fool!" screamed the Colonel afterwards, sitting up and shaking his fist.

The plane made a circuit, side-slipped steeply and landed in the field below. A man got out, vaulted the wall in a swirl of kilt and bare thigh and loped towards them. He was loose-limbed, his walk a male version of Fiona's lithe gait, but it was a very male version. He had a mop of jet-black hair and pale eyes. He was devilish handsome in khaki shirt and old tweed jacket.

"I've warned you a dozen times," hissed the Colonel, pale and mottled. "If you do that once more, Hamish, I'll shoot you down."

"I'm sorry, Colonel. Won't happen again, but I couldn't resist



it when I spotted the Chieftain herself. How are you, Quenie?" He pinched Fiona's cheek, whereupon she slapped him tempestuously. He fingered a reddened jaw. "Just the same old Eve, I see. Hullo, Elspeth. And who's this?"

"This is Digby P. Ross, my American cousin-in-law, just arrived today—Lord Balgersho."

"I'm delighted to meet you." He smiled with grace and charm. "Welcome to the Highlands."

Digby was pleased. "Do you fly a lot?"

"Whenever I can get juice. I picked up that old crate from war surplus. She's pretty well had it."

"Hamish is our local hero," said the Colonel. "He shot down Lord knows how many Boche planes in the war. How many was it, Hamish?"

"Fifty-two. Elspeth, may I get myself a glass of milk?"

Elspeth mumbled and went with him into the house.

"His morals may not be all that," the Colonel said. "But Hamish is tough. You should see him on the hill. Oh, you will of course, day after tomorrow. They say he was the best fighter pilot we had. And I'll tell you an extraordinary thing about him, Digby P.—he never touches a drop of alcohol, says he can't understand why anyone drinks the stuff. He's a remarkable young chap." Hero worship from the Colonel.

"He's a remarkable crook," Fiona said bitterly. "Like every other cursed Tarr of Balgersho aye was."

"Your speech suffers under ancient passions, m'dear."

"If he does anything to spoil the Gathering," she growled, "I'll kill him. Now I'm going home. Thanks for dinner, Uncle Farquhar." She turned and strode in the direction of the front door.

Oh, no! Impossible! Please don't leave me! "What is the Gathering?" Digby asked to gain time, hurrying along beside her.

She said, touching her great brooch, "Our mid-century Gathering. From the four corners of the earth my clansmen will come to pay me homage—from England and America and Australia and Canada and New Zealand and South Africa and Argentina and those places and Scotland, too, of course." She said the list dreamily with her eyes veiled. "That'll be a braw day—massed pipers, dancing, games, the marching of the Clan."

"I bet it'll be wonderful," Digby said. He could see the Pilgrims in his mind's eye, each bearing the stamp of a far exile, each bending the knee to his Chieftain, his Queen, his Highland goddess.

"You can come," she said simply, staring at him. "Saturday week." They walked to her car. He held open the door.

"What make is it?" he asked, stalling again.

"An Austin Seven, 1929 model." And she added: "You're

the nicest American I have ever met, Mr. Ross."

"I wish you'd call me Digby," he said, voice cracking.

"Och yes," she murmured. "Aechi-va, Digby. That means good night, Digby, in Gaelic." She rested an exquisite hand on his. She pressed the starter button. There was a click, but nothing happened. "Could you give me a wee push?"

Digby gave her a wee push to the beginning of the hill. The engine caught. She waved.

As the midget vehicle chugged away, Elspeth arrived, churning up gravel. "Just my luck," she panted, the green sweater in her hand. "Ready to try on for bust."

Digby shivered.

The Colonel and Lord Balgersho stood by the Cadillac. "I say, what a wizard car," said the latter. He at once sat himself behind the wheel and fiddled. "I'd like to drive it sometime."

"Why, of course," Digby said. Then he remembered the provisions in the trunk. He removed three wooden boxes. "A ham and a few groceries in this," he said to Elspeth. "I hope you can use them." And to the Colonel: "Some Scotch whisky and our bourbon. I thought perhaps you would like to try it, sir."

"Would I not! Here, take these in, Elspeth. We have a motor house if you want to put the car away, Digby P., my bountiful friend."

"I'll show you," said Balgersho. "Mind if I drive?"

"Do," Digby said, sitting beside him.

Balgersho drove down through shrubbery in the gloaming. He was one of those people to whom strange cars and automatic drives are known by instinct. They left the car in the garage.

Then they strolled towards the field where a sheen of after-light showed on the wing of the plane. "What do you think of Fiona?"

What do I think of her? Wonderful, superb, marvellous, epitome of womanhood, splendid, elemental? "I think she's quite attractive," Digby said. He didn't trust this guy an inch, but he liked him.

"You know why she hates my guts, don't you?"

Plenty of reasons. "Is it some old feud?"

"You must have come through the Bloody Pass today. In August 1550, the Kilburnies had been stealing our sheep and poaching our deer, so we lay up there and taught them a lesson. Rough times, rough justice. Served them right."

"I knew that," Digby said. "I felt it the moment I entered the pass. I felt the past and the future, too."

Balgersho looked at him. "Odd," he said. "Very odd." He paused. "Well, Fiona is a professional Highlander—pipers, gatherings, loyal clansmen, tame stags for the Monarch, second sight, pixies, and all the rest of that humbug; and such a moron that she thinks her ancestors stand by her side nursing grudges like so many elephants. A hopeless woman, but I must admit she arouses the beast in me. Does she in you, or am I mistaken?" He smiled. He was wicked. You could feel the energy bursting out of him. No wonder he got along on milk.

"She didn't strike me as moronic," Digby said rather stiffly.

"She will," said Balgersho. "She will." They had reached the plane. It was dusk. He opened the door, peered at the switches, went round, turned the prop twice and stopped with his hand on the blade as if a thought had struck him. It had. "I say, old boy," he said. "I wonder if you could spare me a fiver for a few days. I'm temporarily out." No diffidence, no reason given.

A fiver? Five pounds that was. *Never lend money*, Father used to say. *The more dollars you lend, the more dislike you earn, and the less you get back. Better to give it.* But you couldn't just say: *Here, take five pounds.* Not to these people. They had their famous pride. And this fellow was a war-hero, after all, wasn't he? "Why, certainly," Digby said. He selected a crinkly five-pound note.

"Many thanks." Balgersho switched on, then swung the prop in earnest. The engine pattered. "I'd better get cracking. No lights. Good night then. Don't let Galbraith browbeat you. He's a frightful old thug." The plane taxied with a few bursts to the end of the field, turned and took off at once into the western glow.

Digby walked up to the house. "That you, Digby P.?" called the Colonel. "Come and have a nightcap."

Digby went in to drink his own whisky and to listen about India.

CHAPTER 6

THE next day was a day of waiting. Digby listened to the Colonel's stories; walked with him to see lilies and rock garden; went with MacLagan to try for a fish. (*Mr. MacLagan, he said. Have you ever done the hat-trick?—I do not understand what Mr. Ross is meaning.—Got a deer and a grouse and a salmon in one day, I mean?—I would not be after wasting my time over such an ambection. Now Lord Balgersho, His Lordship is aye up to daft tricks like yon.* Disapproval); wandered a short way up the hill; stared many times across to the beginnings of Kilburnie land, to a far grey tower which was a corner of Fiona's castle, to the narrow ribbon of road along which her car would come and did not come. Conscience told him to get out of here. But it was too late.

The day for the shooting arrived. They walked all morning. Fiona, her face flushed and her forehead wet, was in her mountain element. A covey exploded before him and he missed both barrels but Fiona downed a brace. Later a snipe rose, grated, zigzagged away over wild cotton, and you got him; you actually got him. "Good shot," said Fiona. Oh, wonderful words. She came to him with something in her hand. "White heather," she said. "The luck of the Highlands." She stood close to put it in his buttonhole. She was nature unadorned by powder puff or lipstick; she was the eagle and the thunder; her home was on a heather hill.

"Thank you," Digby said, and he lifted his lapel to sniff the faint astringent perfume of a pale green sprig with flowers of purest white, pretty and far more than pretty.

"Aah," she breathed, looking over his shoulder high. "Yonder's a shootable beast."

Digby turned. The stag was silhouetted against blue sky, motionless upon a crag, antlers wide, as if staring from lofty freedom down at the Chieftain, its Royal Keeper. It stood in exactly the pose of the stag in Fiona's brooch, head turned to watch, to taste the air. The antlers tossed once as if in salutation; the great beast strolled over the skyline, out of sight.

A well opened in the depths of Digby, a fountain gave him words: "I am the stag and I the Keeper. I the harvest, I the reaper." The fountain ceased to flow. Had he spoken?

"Digby," she murmured. "It was like a poem."

"What the hell are you two doing?" The Colonel's irate bellow shattered magic. Fiona moved into line, and they walked again.

They stopped at one o'clock at the boathouse beside the loch, to have a lunch of Virginia ham sandwiches.

"You did well, Digby P.," said the Colonel.

"That was a bonny shot at the snipe," Fiona tilted.

"Good show, old boy," said Balgersho in his Oxford accent.

MacLagan came over, removed his hat, such feudal dignity. "Twenty-seven and a half brace, four snipe, twelve hares, one black cock," he reported.

"Well-grown," the Colonel said. "Hardly a cheeper among them."

A party was approaching on the hill road—one tall man followed by a dozen smaller figures, all dressed alike as kilted Boy Scouts. "Yonder come the beaters," said MacLagan.

"The Reverend Lachlan McLean," said the Colonel. "Fledgling priest, patrol leader. The question is, is this the daily good turn or is it to see his lady-love? What do you say, Elspeth? What of your solitary holy swain?"

Elspeth's face, which had been pink from exertion, became crimson. She darted a look at the Colonel. Sometimes you wondered if she loved her father.

"Hallo, Padre," he called heartily. "This is Digby P. Ross from America—Mr. McLean."



The Minister was a lean and earnest young man, all knobbly bones and angles. Elspeth threw pebbles into the loch.

"We're to have a drive," the Colonel explained enthusiastically. "I used to walk all day, but I'm getting old and stiff now. We'll take the four butts nearest the road, and you'd better be on the left, Digby P. Whatever you do, don't shoot along the line." That hint of patronage, of schoolboys from overseas.

"You need have no anxiety," Digby said stiffly.

Fiona was on the right. Hers was the best butt. She was a superb shot, this also among her attributes. Elspeth stood with her, to worship and to mark the birds. Next Balgersho. Next the Colonel. And on the left Digby.

Far away, perhaps a mile, the line of beaters was forming at the loch. Flags waved. Presently the first guttural *Go-Baack* sounded. Digby was supremely happy. He could see the grouse flying low, dipping and rising over contoured land. They came towards Fiona. They milled and bunched and split, flying at great speed. Her shots sounded. Two birds crumpled, struck ground far behind, bounced. Balgersho fired both barrels, got one. The rest of the covey passed through with swish, with mutter of wings.

So it went on. Digby missed four shots running; then he got a bird in front; then he missed five times, then he shot a miraculous right and left. "Good work, Ross!" called Galbraith.

The beaters were near now—men's figures and boys floundering. In the very centre, MacLagan himself, cajoling them. "Steady now, Geordie, my wee laddie. It's not a race we're in. Come away then, Tam Duncan. You're doing fine. Steady on the right."

A covey rose directly before Digby; his turn again. He waited cool and collected. He took his first bird. At that moment the covey changed direction to his right. Still a safe angle for the next butt. He swung into the lead for his second barrel.

It was then that fate played him a dreadful trick. Forefinger was already closing on trigger when the rubber sole of his right boot slipped on wet rock. He was in movement without support.

The shot sounded loud accusation at him as he fell in a heap in the bottom of his butt. *Oh, God!* he thought. *Dear God!*

Silence as he got up. Not a beater's cry, not a grouse's call, nothing but the caress of fresh wind on heather.

"You bloody blank brass-bound blank of a blankety Yank."

He saw it all and heard it all sharply in horror—Colonel Galbraith holding both hands to the left side of his face, dancing and shouting; everyone running, Boy Scouts, Minister, keepers, MacLagan, Balgersho, Fiona, Elspeth, all converging on the Colonel's butt. Digby ran, too.

"I'm terribly sorry," he panted up.

Balgersho pulled the Colonel's hands away and wiped the bloody cheek with his handkerchief. "Not so bad," he said coolly. "Three pellets. Nothing to make a fuss about, Colonel."

"Nothing to make a fuss about!" screamed the Colonel. "Nothing to make a fuss about when a homicidal maniac shoots me!"

"I'm terribly sorry," Digby said again. "I apologize, Colonel Galbraith. My right foot slipped on wet rock."

"Foot slipped indeed? What bunkum! And anyway didn't I tell you this morning that your blasted rubber-soled boots were no good on these hills? But would you listen to me? No!"

How could I buy new shoes at 9 a.m. in this accursed country? He felt less humble, but he said it again with sincerity: "I'm sorry."

"You accept my hospitality; then you pepper me by way of thanks. You're a menace, you Americans, the whole lot of you."

This was too much to take from any man. As Digby's anger rose, some devil reminded him of a small duck-boy who had been shot by an American in India.

"Count yourself lucky I didn't pepper you in the bare brown backside," he remarked icily.

The Colonel's bloodstained jaw slackened, his mouth fell open, his colour became livid, as Minister, keepers and Boy Scouts clattered up in hobnailed boots and formed a circle. Lord Balgersho had fallen to the ground. "Hoo Hoo," he moaned, writhing epilep-

tically. "Backside!" Finally he sat up. He was weeping. "His bare brown backside! Rich! Best thing I ever heard."

MacLagan stood over him. "His Lordship aye took pleasure in the hurrts of others," he said, and turned to Digby: "Mr. Ross was a disappointment." Then he went over to the Colonel. "The Laird will take my arm." Tall servant and pudgy master walked slowly towards the road. But the master of this situation was MacLagan.

"We must give thanks for a truly providential escape from worse disaster," the Reverend Mr. MacLean said to Elspeth. She turned her full basilisk attention upon him. He blushed.

"Never mind, Digby," said Fiona. "Dinna fash yersel", as we say." She gave him a friendly smile. She supervised the picking of her birds. Then they all walked over to the road.

Balgersho giggled intermittently. "There's more in you than meets the eye, Digby old boy," he said. "First you pepper him. Then you silence the old beezer utterly. It's a triumph."

"Don't fool me," Digby said sadly. "It was a disgraceful thing. I have no alternative but to leave at once."

This had a startling effect on the Highland chieftains. They made common cause.

"But Digby, my dear chap, you can't possibly do that. We're just getting to know you. We like you tremendously already. Don't we, Fiona?"

"Och yes," she said. "Besides, I was hoping to show you Kilburnie tomorrow. I have so many plans still to make for the Gathering, and people to visit, and I was thinking p'raps you could drive me round."

Digby weakened somewhat at this delicious invitation. Later, he weakened altogether over whisky with the bandaged Colonel, whose three pellets had been removed. Unaccountably, Colonel Galbraith seemed almost submissive. He treated Digby with a new deference. But Digby spent a troubled night, tossing and turning till dawn.

CHAPTER 7

THE Colonel's humility did not last. That morning at breakfast he was the same old Colonel. He wore three unnecessarily large Band-Aids on his left cheek, and he remarked, helping himself to eggs and American bacon: "The last time I was wounded was at Mons in '14—long before you people decided to win the war."

"Where were your wounds that time, Colonel?" Digby asked blandly, having outlined a policy in the restless watches of the night.

Galbraith shot a glance from piggy little eyes.

"Low down in the back," Elspeth said. "Wasn't it, Daddy?"

They ate. "Excellent bacon." Then at the marmalade stage: "What are your plans today, Digby P.? The river's too high."

"Fiona has visits to make about the Gathering. She asked me to drive her around."

"Capital idea. Capital. Watch your step with that girl, though. Full of animal cunning. She smacks of it. Doesn't she, Elspeth?"

As Elspeth snorted and collected the breakfast dishes and set off to the distant kitchen, Digby was once more confused by these people; strange how they would speak ill of one another, then team up to go hunting, shooting, as if enmity was a thing to turn on and off like a tap. Back home now, you did business with men you disliked—you had to. But in your social life you moved with people you were fond of.

"What's on your mind, Digby P.?"

"I was thinking how different we are from you," said Digby.

"We're full of sinful hypocrisy and disillusionment, hence honesty," the Colonel said. "And you people bubble over with loving simplicity and violence. To you friendship is a mutual-ego society. To us a friend is quite often a chap we rather dislike."

"Take Hamish and Fiona," Digby said carefully. "Would you say they were really friends under it all?"

"No," said the Colonel. "I think friendship under it all is hardly the word in that case."

LATE that afternoon Digby and Fiona sat together in the Bloody Gorge. Ten feet below them the dark river scudded. Beyond was sheer cliff. Behind, the scree rose steeply to broken rock.

It was a black brooding place, the place for an old black tale of bloody treachery with the voice of the river hissing and grumbling in its cleft below in accompaniment to Fiona's story.

"They rolled the muckle rocks," she said quietly, with a backward sweep of her arm. "That was for confusion. Then the cursed Tarrs came down the scree, fifty men to our thirty, armed with the broadsword and us an innocent hunting party. They butchered every living soul among us—Kilburnie himself, Malcolm, Younger of Kilburnie, the clansmen—they hurled the corpses into the river." She pointed her long finger at the dark water. "But that blood was never washed away."

Fiona sighed. A glint of westerling sun struck along the black Bloody Gorge and touched her auburn hair. She looked at Digby, her eyes dimmed. She was far away and long ago and here as the priestess.

"It was at this hour of an August evening," she continued darkly. "Fiona Kilburnie was just a lassie at the time and she and her distant cousin Ian were dreaming in first love on the heather bank up there beyond the gorge. They heard the screams and murderous yells. Fiona guessed at once it was a Tarr ambush. She drew her dirk—she was allowed a small one, being the Chieftain's daughter—and called on Ian to run with her to the rescue. *No, Fiona!* the laddie cried. *They'll kill you. Let me go!* But she was away already with a toss of her hair. It was just the colour of mine, they say. And she and Ian ran side by side down to sure death to this very place in the gorge. The Tarrs saw her coming just as the last body toppled in the water, just as the first rays of sun struck in from the west through her bright hair streaming, dirk flashing

for revenge. They thought it was God sending vengeance in a woman's shape. They fled.

"Her father was dead, and her brother, too, but Fiona had triumphed. The surviving Kilburnies made her Chieftain. From that day to this the head of the Clan can be man or woman."

"It's a wonderful story," Digby said. "A terrible story. You know," he said after a pause, "it's a mighty queer thing, Fiona, but the moment I drove in here the other day I knew there had been murder. I could feel violence all around me, not only in the past but in the future. I can't explain it."

"There's no explanation for the second sight." Fiona stood up and turned to stare into Digby's eyes. "In the future, too? You're a fey man," she said sombrely, and they walked westwards from that place of evil and gallant memory.

"Did the boy—did Ian and Fiona marry?"

"Yes," she said. "They were married, and he took the Kilburnie name. He had been born Ian Prissitulchan."

"What?" said Digby. He turned to look back down the gorge.

"Ian Prissitulchan. Why, Digby?"

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing at all. Rather an unusual name, though, or is it common around here?"

"No. The Prissitulchans are all dead and gone, died out long since. They used to live down near Perthshire, just the one family."

They had driven fifty miles since morning in a great circle over Kilburnie land, stopping many times by the wayside for Fiona to speak her summons to the Gathering. Then they had visited Crummock on catering matters, returning at last by way of the gorge for the telling of Fiona's story. But that interlude was over. Once more they cruised serenely, and the evening sun was warm. Fiona had been gentle, so different by herself away from those others, so kindly, too, with her humble clansmen. But her mood changed again now as they drew near the Birks.

"Tell me, Digby," she said, sitting away off curled up lazily in the corner. "You have a wife, do you not?"

"Yes," he said, and because it seemed a bald answer to such a question: "She's spending August on the Maine coast at a place called Bar Harbour."

"What like is she?"

That intoxicating inversion. "Madeleine is dark," Digby said. "About your height but . . ." What was the word? *Slimmer*? No, definitely not right. *Less well-developed*? Couldn't say that. "But she's more slightly built."

"D'you mean I'm stocky?" The fire smouldered, responsive to the lightest fanning, the merest zephyr of air.

"No," Digby said too loudly. "You have a swell figure."

Fiona chuckled, rubbing her shoulder blades to and fro on the leather. "It *is* good," she admitted and went on: "You're a grand figure of a man, Digby. I'd like to see you in the kilt." It was wonderful the way this child, this woman of nature said whatever came into her head. "How many wives have you had altogether, Digby?"

"Only one," he said, a little put out; but he made a joke of it. "You sound as though you thought I was a Mormon."

"Och no!" she said. "I just meant Americans always seem to be going off to Reno and those places you read about; the lucky things to be able to afford it."

He looked at her and she looked back at him with her green eyes, wholly innocent. She sighed a long sigh. "Tell me about yourself," Digby said desperately because he could not stand it. "Why haven't you married long ago?"

"Well," she said, "the war started when I was just eighteen and I felt I had to do my bit so I joined the Wrens, that's our women's part of the Navy, and I was stationed away over at Oban the whole war and the sailors were coming and going all the time and I must say there's something about sailors I do like very, very much but I never seemed to fall in love, really in love I mean, perhaps because there were so many unhappy boys to be nice to and try to make them happy again after those awful convoys." Fiona sighed.

"Then Daddy died just after the war and I came into my full

responsibilities as Chieftain. I'll have to get married one of these days though for the sake of the Clan but it gets harder and harder to make a choice because I do like men so much and whenever I see a really braw man I'm rather afraid of making a mistake." They drove into the Birks and along a winding mile.

"Look, Digby." She pointed across to a park where two great deer were browsing. "There are the two Royal Stags. One's fourteen points and one fifteen. We catch two calves every year—so the stock's always wild—and keep them in a stag's nursery till they're big. But there are just two Royal Stags at the one time. Then if the King wants them all he has to do is send me a message. He doesn't ever send messages nowadays which is rather a pity."

They were coming to the Birks. Digby had been there that morning, but seeing it again now for the second time in late sunlight, he was even more impressed and staggered. It was an enormous palace of dome and castellated tower, of fountains and terraced steps, by far the largest mansion he had ever seen. But the panes were streaked, the fountains did not play, the grass grew rankly. Only in the square bastion of the East Tower—which he had watched from Glendrogan—were windows clean; and from a high flagstaff flew the standard of Kilburnie—a golden stag upon a green background.

"Here we are," said Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks. She yawned and stretched on the seat of the Cadillac. "Oh, I'm so happy and hungry and thirsty for a dram."

CHAPTER 8

"WHICH would you prefer?" Digby said. "Scotch or bourbon?"

"Bourbon," she said. "I always try new things. It's like people."

He removed a case of Old Grand-Dad from the trunk and they entered.

"The Tower's in four stories," Fiona explained, "and there's a flat roof at the very top where I sun-bathe all by myself not wearing a stitch on fine days." They climbed stairs and into a big room, a lovely room with deep embrasured windows on three sides. "We could take some of your whisky now, Digby, if you like. Here's a hammer to open the box. I'll get glasses."

Digby knelt and set about the case with a claw hammer. He drew out a bottle.

"And would this be the Mr. Ross my Fiona was speaking about? *A fine chentleman from over the water*, was what she said to me."

Digby looked up. A smiling old lady stood at the door. She was plump, her cheeks as red as Mackintosh apples, her hair grey. It must be Nanny. He stood up to shake hands.

From below: "Nanny! Where did you put those big tumblers?"

"My sweetie's that impatient," Nanny chuckled. "Mr. Ross will excuse me." She bustled out of the room. "Hush, dearie," he could hear her chiding on the way downstairs. "Keep yer bonny hair on."

Fiona brought glasses and water and they drank bourbon sitting side by side on the sofa. "It's the most different taste," she said. "Terribly nice and strong. All we're having for dinner is cold grouse and strawberries on a tray in here, then I'll take you round the rest of the house, Digby. Would you like that?"

"Suits me," Digby said. "Anything you say, Fiona." She drank wholeheartedly like a man. She did everything, well almost everything, like a man and much better than a man and she was the most womanly wonderful woman or girl rather.

Nanny panted up to pull cords at a dumb-waiter. She put the trays in front of them. "There!" she said. "A whole grouse each, and thick cream to the strawberries, and my own bread baked this forenoon. Is there anything else Mr. Ross would fancy?"

"Not a thing. This is perfect, thank you, Nanny. The best-looking dinner I ever had in my life."

"Go away upstairs," said Fiona. She seemed to treat the old dear with scant consideration.

"I'll wait a wee minute," Nanny announced calmly. She perched herself on the arm of a chair. "I like fine to see my bebbie eat a bird in the fingers."

Digby had copied Fiona's example, and as he bit into the succulent breast of grouse he watched her sink white teeth into hers, the rippling line of jawbone, the honest animal grace of back of the hand wiped across mouth. She was intent, lost in the pleasure of eating.

Nanny sighed. "It's nice for my bebbie and me to have a chentleman the like of Mr. Ross to dinner in the house." She waddled off.

Digby basked in this approval, and in the well-being of good food, and whisky, and in the bright perils of imagination. "Has she been with you all your life?" he asked.

"From the month," Fiona said, whatever that might mean. "The old besom's fair daft about men." She laid down the last bared bone and sucked her fingers, pop, one by one.

"There's no two ways about it," she remarked later. "Grouse and strawberries make a marriage, and such a pity you only get them together for a week or two because of the seasons."

She got up. "I could start all over again," she said. "I'm not a bit full. Look!" She stood in profile, the line of her waist a perfect flatness in the concavity between hip bone and breast. She gave him her hand. "Come on then, Digby. Let's go round."

She took a bunch of keys off a hook on the panelled wall, and he followed her through a door into the main house. Their shoes made footprints in the immemorial dust, echoing from one great room to another, where spider webs crossed every murky angle, and filaments made eery elfin brush upon the cheek, and wall-paper looped in faded ribbons, and gilt was tarnished, and odd chairs, sofas, stools, pictures and pianos stood and hung forlornly.

"I guess it's very old," he said, oppressed by the harvest of so much human effort rotting back to nothing.

"The East Tower is thirteenth century," Fiona explained. "But this part was rebuilt and made huge in the nineteenth when the building races were on. Everyone tried to have the biggest house and we beat them all including the Balgershos. It's a very handy place, really. It could easily be done up if I had the money." She glanced at him and walked on.

"This is the ballroom," Fiona said, opening one half of a double door. It was an immense chamber, with three straight walls and a long graceful row of windows on the outside. "All the Kilburnies," she said, waving a hand at portraits in double rows. "They're needing to be restored, some of them. Here's the Fiona who routed the Balgershos I was telling you about." Digby looked at the face, which was hardly more than a visible oval in murky canvas. Was there a likeness? You couldn't tell.

"The great chandelier weighs half a ton. Listen!" She picked up a long staff which lay conveniently to hand, stretched on tip-toe and tapped the chandelier smartly. Myriad facets sparkled in the evening light; there was a clinking trill as a thousand slivers of glass made musical frolic. It was a splendid chandelier.

"But the most unusual thing about it is the cairngorm. Come here, Digby, and I'll show you. You have to stand right under the very centre and look up. No, come closer. Don't worry, Digby, it won't fall. It never has yet."

But Digby was not worrying lest the chandelier should fall. He stood facing Fiona as they craned their necks back to see the noble cairngorm which was an amber jewel in the very heart and root of a twinkling city of glass. "I can see it," he said against his Adam's apple: it was a difficult pose to hold, yet he would not break it.

She found that difficulty, too, for she tottered and grasped at his shoulders to save herself, and he to save himself, and both to save one another.

Then their lips met in a first kiss in silence except for the dwindling fairy tintinnabulation overhead.

Time was a waterfall until Fiona disentangled herself. "How did it happen, Digby?" she murmured. "Just suddenly out of the blue and us never dreaming of it did you like it Digby?"

"Like it!" he said, seizing her again, but she broke away from him. "I'll say I liked it."

"I knew it. Oh Digby, you do kiss beautifully. *What's that?*"

It was a man's voice calling in the distance. "Hamish!" she snarled, angry in the twinkling of an eye. "He *would* come now. Wait here, Digby, while I sort him."

He watched her stride down through the ballroom.

Digby drew gulps of musty air. He was here in the ballroom of a derelict Scottish mansion: but he was not here or there or anywhere except in the spell of Fiona Kilburnie. Now at the centre window looking through a cracked pane at cupid-dotted terrace and urns and moss-crannied steps and a sweep of overgrown lawn down to the park where two Royal stags browsed. He steadied himself against the clamorous riot of his senses. The distant stags had ceased to feed and were having a half-hearted sparring match with antlers locked. He was reminded of that whim which had captured his fancy—the hat-trick, the stag, the salmon and the grouse, *the aim of every Highland Nimrod*. How trivial it seemed compared with what had just happened.

Why was Fiona being so long? Balgersho! You couldn't trust that guy an inch. Digby made one of his quick decisions. He walked on rubber-soled shoes down the ballroom and into the East Tower. He heard voices outside.

"Fair's fair, Hamie," she was saying. "Fair dos."

"But that's just what I'm saying, you beautiful idiot. All profits on a fifty-fifty basis. Otherwise cut-throat competition. Then I'll run rings round you."

"Stop it, Hamie! Oh, all right then, except for the Gathering. But I'll not share on that. The Gathering's sacred."

"Sacred my foot, but okay, I agree. No treachery though. If you do me down, I'll . . ."

Some private business, Digby concluded, not his affair. He cleared his throat and walked heavily towards them.

"Here's Digby," she said loudly.

"Hello, old boy," said Balgersho. "Fancy seeing you. What's she been doing to you?" He smiled his disreputable smile.

"She's been giving me an excellent cold dinner," Digby said. But since what else she had just been giving him was particularly vivid, he grasped for another subject, any subject: "Have you ever done the hat-trick, Hamish? I meant to ask you."

"The hat-trick, the triple feat?" Balgersho laughed.

"Yon's the kind of daft trick he's aye up to," said Fiona. She looked and sounded rancorous again.

"I do wish you'd spare us this music-hall dialect, Fiona. Digby isn't impressed, are you, Digby? Actually, I've done the hat-trick five times. It's mostly a matter of the fish—simple enough if you can get that. But I did a double last year, two of each. Why?"

"I was interested was all," said Digby, who was more interested in when this smart-alecky peer of the busted realm would go away.

"I say, old boy, I wonder if you could possibly do me a favour? That miserable little kite packed up on me just along the road. I only got into the field by the skin of my eye teeth. Fuel stoppage, I think, and the thing is I said I'd drop in late at the fighter boys' dinner in Crummock tonight. Do you think you could possibly lend me your car till tomorrow morning?"

"Why certainly," Digby said at once. "Provided there's some way I can get back to Glendrogan," he added, to dispel any wrong impression.

"I could lend Digby the Austin," Fiona said. She, too, seemed anxious to see the last of Balgersho.

"Many thanks, then. I suppose the key's in the car." Lord Balgersho loped over to the Cadillac, turned and said: "Fair dos, remember, Queenie." He drove off smoothly.

"You'll be lucky if you see that again," Fiona said, but she

sighed with relief. "Thank goodness he's gone. Shall we go and have a drink of your lovely whisky now, Digby?"

"Lead me to it." Inhibitions? Melancholy doubts? Had he ever had them?

Highland evening passed into Highland night and the moon rose over mountains to the south. They sat close together on the sofa. An owl hooted somewhere outside. Hoooooooooh! a cool mournful antiphony to warmth. "You're wunnerful," Digby mumbled. He reached out and touched the sleek tresses.

"Digby."

"Mmmmmmmmm?"

"Would you like to go up on the roof for a minute?"

"Kay."

They started up the carpeted stairs. She took his hand. They came at last on to the roof, the moon-dark summit of the East Tower. "Now kiss me again," she said.

Moments later, she murmured, "Do you love me terribly? Is loving me the only thing?"

"Yes." It was the only thing. No other thing had ever existed.

"I just want to show you the amphitheatre. Do you see where the rocks are shining this side of the hill? That's the place of the Gathering of Clan Kilburnie. There they all pass before me in review. You'll help me with the Gathering, won't you, Digby?"

"Sure, sure." Anything, anything at all.

"Oh, Digby is my darling," she sang contralto as they went below. "Oh, Digby is my darling, my darling, my darling. Oh, Digby is my darling, my young chevalier." She could sing, too.

"Who are all those little fellows?" he asked, pointing to eight kilted dolls or manikins lined up on a table. They were complete to sporrans, bonnets, hose, varying tartans, dark and jazzy.

"Those are my wee highland men," Fiona said. She touched them one by one. "Colin on the left, then Donald, Sheepy, Fergus, Geordie, Douglas, Torquie, and Neil's the last one. Don't you think they're rather sweet, Digby?" He didn't. For some

reason he didn't like the creatures. "What are they in aid of?"

Fiona giggled. "Silly Digby," she said. "They're not in *aid* of anything. They're just my wee men to keep me company."

"Are they meant to be real people?" he demanded.

"Och no! How would dolls be like real people? You couldn't be jealous of a doll, could you? Come, Digby. Come sit here."

It was getting late. A clock struck far away somewhere. It went unnoticed.

"Digby P. Ross," she murmured. "It's such a rich solid sort of name. What does the P. stand for, Digby?"

I knew she would ask. I knew it ever since this afternoon. And do I tell her? Do I keep my secret? Much wiser not to say.

But he had hesitated too long. "Tell me! Please tell me. Don't be mean, Digby." Some instinct told her it was important.

"Digby Prissitulchan Ross," he said. Prissy Ross at his first school, just prissy enough always afterwards to be afraid of a funny public label on the road through life.

"Prissitulchan!" she cried, rasping the dry sound up through her throat. "My Prissitulchan! I knew there was some reason. Oh Digby, but we're cousins! Why didn't you tell me?"

"I don't use the name," he said. Might as well be honest. "Prissy means sort of priggish in America. And, of course, I had no idea about that story. You see, my grandfather was a shepherd's son, and he emigrated back in the sixties. It was his middle name, too, and my father's, and we never traced the lineage or where we came from except that it was Scotland." He got up. He was shy about the whole business. He wished he had not told her. It was nearly half past one. What was that Colonel going to say?

"The marvellous thing about it," Fiona said sitting with her chin on her knees, "the marvellous thing," she mused, "is that now you're a blood relation, I can ask you to really help me over the Gathering. You see I'm absolutely broke, Digby darling, and we must make it a success with my clansmen coming from the four corners of the earth. How much can you manage?"

"How much do you need?" Suddenly it seemed to him in a bleak moment that everyone wanted things and nobody gave him things, even Fiona. But, of course, it wasn't quite true. Let me see, a hundred pounds is say two-eighty. "Would a hundred pounds be any help?"

"It would be a great help." Grateful but not ecstatic.

"I could make it two."

"Oh, thank you, Digby, for being so generous and sweet. You know it's not for me. I wouldn't take a penny for myself."

"Only one condition," he said. "That you don't breathe my middle name to a soul."

"Of course I won't, Digby. You know what would be wonderful? If you could sort of march in the Gathering at my side like the old Ian Prissitulchan who charged with the old Fiona Kilburnie and perhaps you could make a speech. My clansmen would be terribly thrilled. It would be the making of the whole thing to have history again like that, me the last of the Kilburnies and you the only Prissitulchan in the world. It's like fate, Digby."

It was indeed. It was the beautiful inexorable hand of fate.

"Can you make speeches, Digby?" She stood up to yawn. She yawned like a sleepy Highland Venus, so wild and free and proud of her possessions including him now it seemed.

"Yes," he said. He was an extremely good speaker actually, as everybody said. He felt better again and wonderfully daft. "I can make speeches and shoot grouse and pepper that corny old Colonel and do the hat-trick and I love you and I can write an ode. I can do anything you like, but I do not wish to have my middle name disclosed. Let's have a quick drink before I go."

"You're a funny person, Digby," she said. "So serious most of the time, and then suddenly making jokes as if you were only twenty or something. I'd like it fine, we'll have a muckle dram each."

"*Schlanch*," she said, as they drank. "That means: Good Health, my Digby."

"*Skol*," he said cleverly. "That means the same. *Skol*, my Fiona." He felt so good that he sang it. "Now I really must go. What shall I tell your Uncle Farquie if he hears me come in, if I ever get there that is, no reflection on your teensy-weensy automobile?"

She studied him. "You're all right are you, Digby? You haven't had too much? You're not a wee thing fu' as we say?"

"Certainly not." He felt tremendously happy and pleased with himself. "Come, Fiona," he said. He put his arm round her pliant waist. She leaned on him to the door and downstairs.

Outside at last, they went round the angle of the tower. Moonlight touched thirteenth century stone, gleamed on the smooth trunks of beeches, cast mysterious shadows, sparkled on dew on a small close-cropped piece of lawn. The night owl hooted.

Fiona broke free from Digby and ran laughing across the lawn, darting from shadow to paleness, twirling in the cool night, dancing the Highland Fling with traditional cries.

Nanny's voice from high above, chuckling, clucking: "My naughty bebbie at her capers. Come away in, dearie. Mr. Ross should please send my bebbie ben the house."

Fiona spun to a stop. "Hud yer whissht, you old besom."

"Tut-tut now," said Nanny, not a bit put out.

"Where's the car?" asked Digby. It was two o'clock. "Where's that lil' ole rattletrap of yours?"

Fiona flashed into a rage with arms akimbo. "Don't you dare make fun of me, too poor like a kirk mouse to afford a new one."

"Sorry, Fiona," he said, and quoted: "Keep your bonny hair on, dearie."

She was calm again, took him to the garage. The starter would not work. Digby cranked and cranked and cranked, not a spark of life. He leaned against the wall, out of breath. "I guess I'd better walk," he panted. Things were going round a bit.

"You could take Nanny's bike," Fiona said. "Can you ride one?"

Ride a bike? It was twenty-odd years since he had ridden a bicycle. But once learned never forgotten, everyone knew that. In his



present mood he could do anything. "Of course I can ride a bike."

"Mr. Ross is taking your bike, Nanny. Gotta lamp?"

Nanny had no lamp.

"I don't need one," Digby said. "Plenty silvery moon."

"It's not that," Fiona explained. "It's Constable McIntoon. Our bobby is an absolutely gudgey stinker out in the wee small hours trying for promotion."

"If I see him," Digby said, "I shall either hop off or ride him down according to my mood."

"Which reminds me," she said. "I must get a good night's rest. Tomorrow I'm on the Bench with Uncle Farquhar. We're trying criminals."

"What next? I didn't know you were a judge, too," Digby

sniggered. "Well, now you know." She flared, but only for an instant. "Do be careful of that McIntoon, Digby."

Digby grasped handle-bars and found pedal. "Careful?" he said loudly. "Careful! Caution ne'er stormed a fortress in life's battle." It was to be the codification of his new philosophy.

He mounted and wobbled off with dignity. No, he had not lost the art.

CHAPTER 9

CONSTABLE Angus McIntoon believed that man was made for LAW, and McIntoon was its instrument. He never made a mistake and he followed the inexorable path of duty. He was the most unpopular bobby in living memory.

He waited now at 2.15 a.m. on the 14th of August. His bicycle lay hidden in a bed of nettles. He himself sat in shadow at the north end of the old bridge. The river was wide here, a fisherman's path running along each bank. In the moonlight he could see half a mile upstream to the right, downstream to the left. The river burbled, the water glistened and a salmon jumped clean, silvery, exploding the peace of night.

A week before Constable McIntoon had observed a small puppy chewing at a salmon's head outside the cottage of Donny Cleghorn, a rabbit trapper by occupation, a drunken wastrel when he had the cash, an inveterate poacher always. Not evidence enough to lay charges; for that, you had to catch the poacher redhanded. But McIntoon knew that Cleghorn would likely be trying for another fish to sell for beer money. Shortly after midnight a glimmer of light had appeared in Donny's tumble-down cottage and McIntoon had hurried to his place of vantage at the bridge.

But crime did not come along the river. It came down the narrow road from the Birks. It came first in the shape of a bicycle without lamp, making a most erratic progress—the rider fell off, picked himself up, mounted and wobbled nearer. It came second

in the shape of loud shoutings, then offensive, strangely alien song, then fierce animal cries.

Constable McIntoon crouched in the shadows beyond the bridge, hand on the baton, symbol and weapon of his office. He licked his lips, formulating charges.

MEDICAL men say that the human engine sags to its lowest and slowest in the early hours of the morning. Digby's engine, however, was an exception shortly after 2 a.m. on August the 14th. He felt splendid as he bicycled back down the avenue. The stags were still browsing. The moonlight gave cool and adequate illumination. He rode moderately straight on Nanny's bicycle.

The hand of destiny lies over all, he thought. For me this has been ordained, good old Digby, President of the Ross Corporation, member of this club and that club and so on and so on. Fiona! Golly, what a girl! She could make a fortune in Hollywood, that bebbby. But too proud. She loves her clan too much.

Hitherto Digby had not spoken. Now, as he passed in good order through ivy-mantled stag-emblazoned gates to the public road, he saw the bridge in the distance, and at the sight long-unremembered heroic lines came surging back:

He reeled, and on Herminius
He leaned one breathing space,
Then, like a wildcat mad with wounds,
Sprang right at Astur's face.
Through teeth, and skull, and helmet
So fierce a thrust he sped,
The good sword stood a hand-breadth out
Behind the Tuscan's head.

It's the wrong way round, Digby thought. Horatius was defending, and I'm charging at the bridge. Oh well, never mind, the principle's the same.

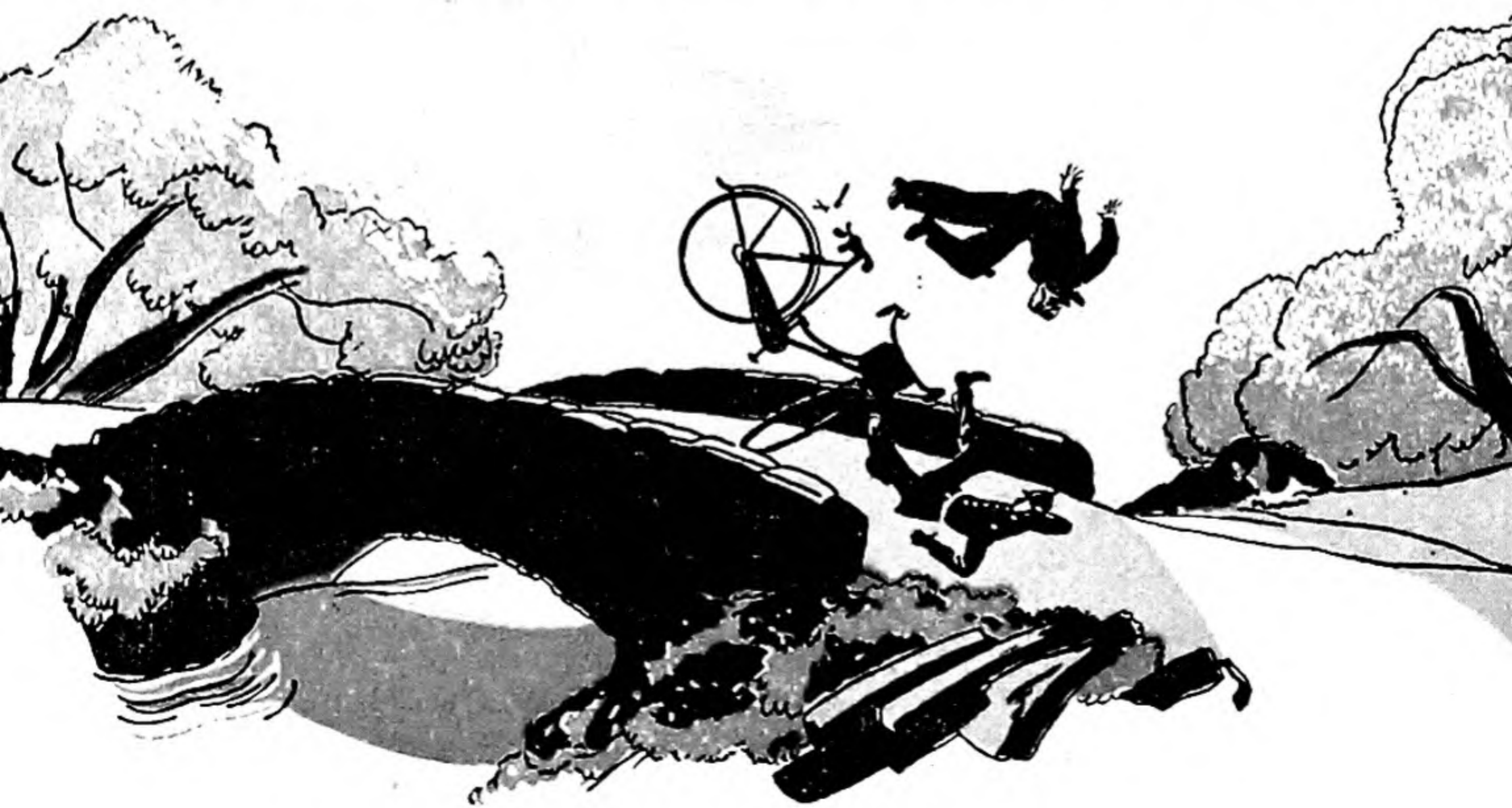
His left foot slipped off the pedal. The bicycle lurched, weaved over and back across the narrow road. "Steady, female veloci-

pede!" he cried. Mind triumphed over matter. He rode on with mighty voice:

On Astur's throat Horatius
Right firmly pressed his heel,
And thrice and four times tugged amain,
Ere he wrenched out the steel.
"And see," he cried, "the welcome,
Fair guests, that waits you here!
What noble Lucumo comes next
To taste our Roman cheer?"

Digby bellowed that challenge. He rode into the ditch. "Come, come," he remarked to himself, stung by nettles, otherwise unhurt and undismayed. He mounted again, and now he was lined up for the assault. He remembered that bridge with a two-foot parapet on either side, a bad cycling bridge at any time. I'll have to take it fast, he thought. I'll have to charge right up over the hump-backed thing and down the other side, thus achieving optimum efficiency in balance and direction. If it were possible for me to be nervous, I would be nervous. Courage then, Ross!

Digby was rather high for the second time since college days.



His college days came now to help him with this obstacle. Of a sudden, as he rode to the attack, he was not here at all. He was back in the stadium of the Crimson banners. He was being tough on poor old Eli, the well-loved and hated enemy. He was seeing the bleachers blue turn pale with fright. But there was song:

O'er the stands in flaming crimson
 Old Harvard for evermore.
 Cheer on cheer, like volleyed thunder,
 Echoes to the sky.
 See the crimson tide is turning
 Gaining more and more
 Then *Fight, Fight, Fight*, for we win tonight,
 Old Harvard for evermore,

He lined up dead-centre, faster and faster and faster.

H-H A-A R-R V-V A-A R-R D-D
 RAH RAH RAH RAH RAH
 RAH RAH
 FIGHT TEAM FIGHT

The cool wind touched his heated face. The pedals twinkled as Digby swept good and true over the hump and the envious McIntoon came out of hiding. He barred the way, right hand up. "Halt!" he shouted harshly. "Halt in the name of the Law!"

Hop off or ride him down according to my mood, Digby had assured Fiona. But it was not a matter of his mood. Sharp-needed intuition told him that the application of brakes would spell disaster. Self-preservation gave him no alternative but to ride the man down. Among many detestable virtues, McIntoon possessed a certain dogged courage. He stood his ground.

They clashed at some twenty miles per hour. The Constable was brushed aside; Digby lurched, reeled and fell heavily. A pedal twirled, a wheel spun on with aimless hum, otherwise silence till he got up. He felt himself. Miraculously, he was okay. The heavy footsteps of the policeman.

"Look here, officer," panted Digby wrathfully. "Why the devil didn't you come out sooner? How'd you expect me to stop on a little gangplank of a bridge? What is this, anyways?"

"I'll tell ye what this is," said McIntoon. He was a tall thin man with cadaverous cheeks, a waxed moustache, a down-hung mouth. "This is firstly, riding a bicycle without lights in hours of darkness—secondly, breach of the peace in shouting insults and bad language while riding said bicycle—thirdly, drunk and disorderly in charge of a vehicle, to wit, said bicycle—fourthly, simple assault in that you did assault Angus McIntoon by striking him a severe blow on the arm and shoulder with said bicycle. And I'm to state that anything you say will be taken down and used in evidence against ye." All delivered in a self-righteous, gloating Scotch voice. It was too much.

Digby's blood was up, far up.

"Listen, flatfoot!" he snarled, eloquent even in rage. "I am a free man and an American citizen. If you so much as raise that bludgeon in your hand, I shall not be responsible for my actions."

"Will you come quiet?" said the relentless constable, moving closer and raising his bludgeon. "Or will I need to put the handcuffs on ye?" He put his left hand out to grasp Digby by the shoulder.

Now, for the first time, one of many recent first, but by far the most disastrous, Digby P. Ross, man of peace, saw the red beacon of fury before his eyes. He parried the left hand, ducked, took a heavy and painful baton blow on his own left shoulder, but he was inside the policeman's guard. The uppercut travelled only a few inches past silver buttons to the long chin. It was a beautiful punch. It would have done credit to a sober professional. It lifted McIntoon a couple of inches off his booted feet.

Even as Digby saw his adversary sag and topple backwards, he saw also the enormity of what he had done. This was not running a policeman down because you feared to stop; this was deliberately assaulting the law in the execution of its duty. "Oh, my God!"

he muttered just before the constable's head thudded against a boulder at the roadside. The man sighed and lay still.

Digby knelt beside him. The heart, the heartbeat? No heartbeat. Oh, but there was. Slow, regular. Well, that was something. He seized the unconscious McIntoon by the shoulders, remembered the fireman's lift learned as a volunteer when he lived on Long Island, somehow heaved him up like a long blue sack of potatoes in the prescribed fashion, and staggered along the road to the village. *I've killed the guy*, he thought. *I've killed him*. He saw an awful picture of himself standing in the dock for murder, taking the death sentence like a man.

He came to a tiny village, just a cluster of cottages adjoining the churchyard. The first time he had passed this way he had seen a blue police sign on one of the cottages opposite the post office. Groaning and gasping for breath, he leaned against a wall to rest. He was pretty well all in. He became aware of a figure lurking, only one figure in the deserted square. It peered, came over with a hand behind its back, peered again. It was a short thick-set man.

"Is yon the pollisman?" he whispered. "Is he deid?"

"Unconscious," Digby panted. "Help me!"

The stranger dropped a long sacked object from his hand. It flapped spasmodically on the road.

"Did ye hit 'im?" he said with awe. "Did ye clock 'im?"

"Yes," Digby said. Although tormented by anxiety, he was still proud of that punch. "Right on the kisser. Bingo! Come on."

Together they carried McIntoon to his cottage, and propped him against the door. He slept on. Digby knocked.

"This is no place for me," said the stranger. "I'll need to be away. Whyn't you get off yer marks while the goin's good?"

"I guess I'll stay," Digby said. "Thanks a lot for helping."

"Man, I'm fair proud o' ye. I'd fine liked to have seen yon punch, a braw blow struck for the glen." He looked at the Constable's inert body and spat. "If ye're needin' evidence, Donny

Cleghorn's the name. Just send word what I'm to say." He slipped off as quietly as a cat.

Footsteps, and the door opened. McIntoon fell inward at the feet of a sleepy youngish woman in a wrapper. She gasped.

"Mrs. McIntoon," Digby said. Was that the name? "I'm afraid your husband got hurt. I'll help you in with him."

"Aye up in the middle o' the nicht," she grumbled, grasping her man's shoulders. "Aye tryin' to catch folk. I tellt him. I says, *McIntoon, one o' these fine days ye'll be found wi' a bullet in yer back*. But would he listen? Och no, just went on poking his long neb in ither folk's business."

"He hit his head," Digby explained to this unexpected ally. "I don't *think* it can be very bad."

"A muckle lump like a pullet's egg," said Mrs. McIntoon. "But the heart's strong. Och, he'll be fine. Are you the American gentleman I was hearin' about?" Digby nodded.

She took a wet cloth and squeezed it over her husband's face. He stirred, moaned, then suddenly sat up straight. His gaze wavered, then focused on Digby: "Now, will ye come quiet?"

"I've come," Digby said, vastly relieved.

The handcuffs clinked as McIntoon drew them from his pocket.

"Angus!" cried Mrs. McIntoon. "Dinna be daft. What'll the Currnel say, and this American gentleman the Currnel's guest up at the Bighoose?"

"I'm no carin' what the Colonel says. I'm doin' my duty as an officer of the law assaulted in the execution of his duty." He rose and went across the room. "I arrest you. . . ."

"Arrest away," Digby said, holding out his wrists. "Do your worst, you miserable cop. If that's your idea of justice, shertainly arrest me and take the consequences."

"It's you'll take the consequences." McIntoon adjusted the handcuffs, staggered slightly, shook his head.

"Okay," Digby said calmly. "I see you have a telephone. Put me through at once to the American Consul."

"I'll do no such thing."

"As an arrested American citizen," Digby said, "I have the right of immediate access to the representative of my country. I demand that right."

The Constable shook his head. "No when inebriated," he said judiciously.

"Am I drunk, Mrs. McIntoon?"

Mrs. McIntoon had had a hard life being wedded to relentless bigotry. She liked the looks of this handsome American though it was true his eyes were a wee bit glazed. "Sober as a Minister," she said. "I'll take the oath in court."

Constable McIntoon went to the telephone, muttering to himself. He would make her pay for this. There was a long wait while voices sounded on the telephone, putting the call through, and Mrs. McIntoon warmed the teapot.

Suddenly Digby was assailed by doubts, not of the righteousness of his cause, but because something was happening to him minute by minute in the hot kitchen. He feared he was not going to make sense on the telephone. But it was too late.

THE CONSUL of the United States was sleepy. He was also bored. He had met these two in the interval of a concert. *Come on back for a drink after, why don't you?* he said because they were celebrated foreign correspondents, Cyrus Becker and Carmen Graves. That was four hours ago. Since then he had been privileged to watch his liquor dwindle and to listen to reminiscences of North Africa, Sicily, Salerno, Avranches, Paris, the Bulge. They were crossing the Remagen bridge in a jeep together at this moment when the telephone rang. Miss Graves went right on talking.

Who would call him this late? Unless it was trouble. He said, "Excuse me," to his unheeding guests, and went out to the hall.

"Yes?"

"Police Constable Mc-something at Blub-blub Crummockshire," the voice said. It was hard enough to understand them face to

face, but on the phone! Mumble mumble mumble. Something about an American citizen in custody, wanting to talk.

He sighed. "Put him on the line."

"This is Digby P. Ross of New York City. I am preshantly visiting in the Highlands. I need your help. Can you hear me?"

He could hear him perfectly well. In fact he had this guy ticketed already: (a) he had been drinking, (b) he spoke with that clipped high-hat Boston-Harvard accent which never failed to prickle the Consul, a man from Springfield, Illinois. "Go on, Mr. Ross."

"I have been unjustly arrested. I was bicycling home peacefully when this constable assaults me at this bridge. He knocks me off. I fall heavily. When I pick myself up he arrests me for a dozen offences I have not committed. It's absolutely outrageous, Mr. Consul. As a law-abiding man I expect the law to abide by me even in this heathen country or I will know the reason why and so will my Congressman. Can you hear me, Mr. Consul?"

"Take it easy, Mr. Ross. Don't shout. You didn't *hit* the policeman, did you?"

"I may have parried his blows in self-defence. More than that certainly not. I am all alone by myself in some severe trouble Mr. Consul without a friend except that Mrs. McIntoon the cop's wife has been kindness itself and I should be ungrateful if I did not pay due acknowledgment to a gracious lady. Thank you, Mrs. McIntoon."

You could almost see the sozzled play-boy bum bowing at the end of the line.

"What charges are being preferred against you?"

"No lights is one. To that alone I plead guilty due to a most unfortunate chain of circumstances, no fault of mine. Breach of said peace is two. Drunk and disorderly in charge of said vehicle is three. Assaulting said constable is four. I don't know how many more he is thinking up at this very moment. I, Digby P. Ross, demand your protection, Mr. Consul."

"Now, listen," said the Consul. Every now and then his patience

wore thin. This was one time. "Listen to me, Mr. Ross. It is my opinion that you have been drinking. There is nothing I can do for you at this time of night even if I wanted to. It's not my job or my intention to help Americans make exhibitions of themselves." He was being rude, but you had to be rude to get it over to a guy in this condition. "Will you listen to my advice?"

Long silence. Finally: "I am ready to hear your advice." Pompous, dignified.

"Okay. Sleep it off, Mr. Ross, right where you are in the police station and don't make any more trouble. If you want legal aid, call me in the morning. Lastly, bear in mind, if you can bear anything in mind, that you might get off easier if you decided to plead guilty. Now let me speak to the police constable again."

He found out the name of the place, hung up and went back to the sitting-room. They were still in Germany, but Carmen Graves stopped talking as he came in.

"You should have heard the phone conversation I just had. Some American guy in trouble up Crummock way. He socked a cop. Then he wondered why Mr. Digby P. Ross should be in jail for assault and being higher'n a kite. Pompous as hell. Polite though, I must say."

"What'd you say his name was?" said Cyrus Becker.

"Digby P. Ross. He might have been President of the United States the way he went on. You don't know him, do you?"

"I know *a* Digby P. Ross. He was in my class at Harvard. President of the Ross Corporation these last five years." Turning to Carmen Graves, he said, "If it is the same one, and I can hardly believe that's possible because the Digby I know is just about the soberest most respectable stuffed shirt in the world, then you and I might find something better to do with our expense accounts tomorrow, today. What say you to a pocket-sized scoop?"

"I say go call your night desk."

Becker got his transatlantic call right away; it took them about one minute to find out. He came back. "It's him," he said.

"The very same. Flew over the other day. Come on, Carmen!"

Their host saw them off in their car. He was a bit fed up with the way they had used him and cast him off. If this Ross had only disclosed that he was likely to be news value when he hit policemen, then the Consul might have given him a break and not told this pair of vultures. Well, it was the man's own fault.

CHAPTER 10

THROUGH the door Digby could hear the measured mumble of policemen, the protestations of offenders, the tramp and shuffle of feet, words now and then in that voice which had beguiled him through ecstatic hours, and now, by rare anomaly, had come here to judge him. Above and through these sounds in hectoring mastery came the tones of Colonel Galbraith.

Digby's throbbing head was buried in his hands. The events of the night before came rushing back in vivid detail.

He was unshaven. His hair—with the iron-grey patches at the temples, so distinguished Madeleine used to say, damn her, all her fault—was a mop. His shirt was grubby. He had hardly slept; in the lock-up in Constable McIntoon's house the ceiling and the barred windows had at first heaved and swung on waves of vertigo; later, self-reproach stormed up to take their place. In the vague panoply of recollection, one thing stood out: he had forgotten the welfare of Fiona. If he made the least fuss, if he contested these charges—just or unjust—he would be cross-examined as to his prior movements, and the rest of the story would come out. *You deny you were drunk. Where had you been then?*

This realization had hit his aching head with the impact of a sledge-hammer. There and then he had resolved to plead guilty.

The Consul had telephoned at ten. Digby had refused legal aid. He had also refused bail, and had been driven, still in the custody of McIntoon, by Lord Balgersho in his own-closed Cadillac con-

vertible, to the Court of the Justices of the Peace at the grey town of Crummock.

This day, begun in glory, had grown to be the blackest of his life. He had disgraced his name; he had let down his country; but far worse, he had been within an ace of betraying a man's most sacred trust.

Digby groaned. Then he sat up straight. He was going to look them in the eye. He was going to show these people he could take it. Through the closed door he heard that Colonel's truculent words of condemnation, bearing out Balgersho's remark as they drove along: *I say, old boy, I don't want to depress you, but Galbraith's a tyrant on the Bench, a hanging judge if ever there was one.*

"Fetch him in!"

The door opened. A policeman waggled a large forefinger, menace in that silent gesture of summons. Digby stood up, squared his shoulders and walked into the crowded courtroom.

As he was hustled into the dock, he could not resist looking once at Fíona. Today she wore a coat and skirt of her tartan, a plain white blouse, a green velvet beret—severely dressed for the judicial function. She was the loveliest lady magistrate in the whole wide world. So cool and fresh and healthy after a good night's rest. She's twice the man I am, Digby thought sadly.

"Is this the American?" rapped the Colonel. The three large Band-Aids dotted his left cheek. He wore pince-nez low on his nose. He looked over them at Digby, coldly contemptuous.

"Yes, Your Honour," said the Clerk of the Court, nervous, fussing with papers.

"Hurry up, then! Read the charges. We haven't got all day to waste on one miscreant."

But as the Clerk of the Court cleared his throat to begin, the door on the far side of the room opened and a man and woman burst in. It was so sudden, so dramatic, that every eye in court, including Digby's, turned to stare at the intruders.

They stood there, wholly at ease; their gaze slowly circled the room, taking in the Colonel, dwelling on Fiona, coming to rest on Digby. They were unmistakably Americans; their presence gave fleeting comfort and encouragement to him until he recognized the man, a classmate far away and long ago, a famous correspondent, a likeable four-flusher named Cy Becker.

"Hiya, Digby!" called Becker, waving his hand. "Sorry to see you in a spot."

"Order in the court!" thundered the Colonel, standing up. "I will not tolerate communication with the accused. What is the meaning of this interruption, you, sir, and you, madam?"

Becker murmured to his companion. She smiled sweetly and said in the hush: "My Lord, we apologize for breaking into the proceedings. We are American correspondents. This is Cyrus Becker and I am Carmen Graves. May we sit down in court, My Lord?" She had the kind of voice that lulls fretful babies.

It lulled the Colonel. "Certainly," he said. "Pray do be seated. We have no secrets here, least of all from representatives of our great sister nation and staunch ally. Now proceed!"

The Clerk of the Court read. Digby had forgotten Constable McIntoon's extempore wording in the night; but hearing these charges now, he remembered. They were identical in substance—no lights, breach of the peace, drunk, assault.

"Are you guilty or not guilty on the first charge?"

"I plead guilty on all four counts, Your Honour," Digby said loudly. He looked the Colonel in the eye; but he was not seeing the Colonel; he was seeing the Highland Fling danced with gay abandon on the lawn. No murmur must sully the reputation of that other Justice who sat so gravely by her senior on the Bench.

"Hmmmmmmmm! You realize that the Bench has no alternative in that case but to award just punishment?"

"I do, Your Honour."

"Is there a statement by the police officer?"

The Colonel then read the statement aloud, and McIntoon swore



to its accuracy. After that McIntoon stated on oath that Digby had wrested the baton from his hand and struck him with it.

"That isn't true," Digby expostulated. "I knocked him down with a perfectly fair punch on the jaw, and he hit his head on a stone. I never touched his baton."

The Colonel rounded on him. "Silence! I will not have the proceedings of the court dominated by an accused person. Is there such a thing as a *fair* punch against a police officer in the execution of his duty?"

The Colonel looked around in triumph.

"The case is closed. Before the Bench decides on sentence, have you any explanation to offer for your conduct?"

"None, Your Honour."

"Come, come, man! Do not act the dolt. Was there no ameliorating circumstance in your Rake's Progress? How did it happen that you were riding or trying to ride a bicycle in this deplorable condition at 2.30 a.m.? Where had you been?"

He knows damn well where I'd been, Digby thought. What's the little swine trying to do? Aloud he said: "I have no statement to make, Your Honours."

There was now an interruption from the back of the spectators' ranks. A short square man was standing. He wore an expression both sheepish and extremely determined. "Curnel!" he called.

The Colonel thumped for silence. "Who is it?" he demanded, peering over his pince-nez, "Oh it's you, Donny Cleghorn. How many times am I to tell you people that when I sit here as a Justice, I have no personal identity? I am not Colonel this or Colonel that, your neighbour. I am the instrument of the *Law*, impartial, anonymous. *I am the Law*." He glared round the court. "Well, what is it?"

"Your Honour, I was roused up by a clatter o' footsteps in the night and I rose from ma' bed and went outben. The accused was carryin' the Constable hame on his ane back just as easy as a bairn. The accused was nae mair drunk than the Curnel is at this minute. I never heard tell yet o' a drunk body able to carry anither body on his back."

"How dare you interrupt with testimony!" snarled the Colonel. "You have not been called as a witness. For once we do not invite your presence in this court, Cleghorn."

"I ken that fine, sir. But I ken justice, too, or the lack. So I says to masel: I'll say my say whatever it costs me."

Donny Cleghorn sat down. There was a ripple of whispers in the courtroom, but that died when Digby said firmly: "I was drunk. There is no question of it. Thank you for your kind attention, sir." More throaty rumbles from the audience. They all hate me, he thought, every one of them. Then he glanced at the front row where Cy Becker and the woman correspondent were seated one on either side of Balgersho, whispering to him and across him, and Balgersho wearing his most indolently diabolical expression. All three looked from Digby to the bench where Fiona twirled a thoughtful pencil in her slim fingers. She was serene. I wonder if she even remembers, Digby thought.

The Colonel was speaking. "Have you any questions to ask the accused?" he asked, turning to Fiona.

She nodded with a lustre of auburn hair. "Just one," and looked at Digby across the gulf from Bench to Dock. "Is it all right or is it frowned on I mean to hit policemen in America?"

Digby gulped. "It is frowned upon, Your Honour."

A distinct titter from the front row. The Colonel smashed down his gavel. "Order in the court!"

He coughed and stood up, a bold, moustached, egg-shaped, puce-faced little beast of a hanging judge if ever there was one. "Before the Bench passes sentence, I feel it my duty to address certain observations to you, D. P. Ross, confessed miscreant. We need not dwell long upon the matter of riding a bicycle without lights. If, in less developed countries elsewhere there may be a casual disregard for road safety, such cannot be tolerated in our crowded island. Here we are many and we hold life dear.

"So much for that. Now, you have admitted that you disturbed the peace not only by shouting and singing but also by the utterance of war cries such as *Fight, fight, fight*. It may be that this aggressive behaviour is customary in your homeland. It is certainly not the custom in our law-abiding community.

"Next as to drunkenness. You admit intoxication. You have refused to tell the court how it was that you became drunk, whether you drank secretly sip by sip on your lurching cycle ride, whether you were led astray by publicans, or met with bad company at some low house. We do not know. We dare not surmise. We can say only that alcohol is your enemy. Eschew it, Ross. Shun it, at any rate for the remainder of your sojourn here in our temperate Highlands. Let me repeat the counsel I myself received as a newly-joined subaltern in India, counsel that I have never forgotten—*If you cannot drink like a gentleman, do not drink!*

"And lastly the matter of assault, by far the most serious of your offences." The Colonel paused to take a sip of water.

Digby stared at him. He could hardly believe it. Was the little

monster really delivering this insulting homily? Keep calm, remember Fiona! he adjured himself.

"You are here as the guest of Scotland, Ross. For how long I do not know. We have held out the hand of hospitality, the olive-branch of friendship, and I feel sure that your fellow Americans, whom we gladly welcome in this court today, will bear me out as to the warmth of Scotland's heart." He paused, and the correspondents, pencils arrested in rapt attention, nodded their heads vigorously.

"What have you done in return? You meet a police officer in the early hours of the morning. You ride him down like a wild beast. You then attack him ferociously, wrest away his baton, strike him to the ground. We are not used to gangster methods here. We are peaceful people. But there are limits to our patience.

"In passing sentence, the court will take into consideration that you are a stranger to our way of life, that this is your first offence, that severity has never been Scotland's heritage."

He sat down to confer with Fiona. Apart from this whispering, there was a dead absolute hush in court. Digby struggled with himself. Red anger glowed. "Control!" he muttered. "Control!"

"The accused will stand. . . . It is within our power to sentence you to fines totalling thirty pounds or four months' imprisonment, but for the reason I have given, we do not intend to be harsh." The Colonel paused. "Twenty pounds or three months."

"Oh! Ooohh! Aaahh!" long drawn out from every corner of the court. One voice only "It's a bloody shame!"

"Order in the court! Was that you, Cleghorn?" No answer.

Digby clenched the wooden railing in front of him. He couldn't help it. "Whoever said that spoke the truth!" he shouted. "Justice! Take a look at this miserable elongated apology for a policeman. Just look at him!" He pointed his trembling finger at Constable McIntoon sitting on the other side. "The man's a byword. Day after day and night after night he prowls around trying to make criminals of innocent people. Then he perjures himself. No won-

der they call him The Stinker." Digby paused for breath. He had them all stunned. A dim memory gave him ammunition. "Drunk I may have been slightly, but I am glad indeed that I struck this blow for the honest people of the glen." He turned to the Colonel, who was visibly paler. "I shall not pay one cent of a fine. I shall go to jail for three months, and proudly, as a gesture against tyranny. As for you . . ." But strong arms were seizing him. He had blown his top. He was led back to the cell.

"Man," said the Sergeant inside. "There's no grudge against ye in the Force. It was high time somebody learned yon McIntoon a lesson."

"Thanks," said Digby. He sat down.

They went away, closed the door, locked it. Then the key rasping again. He turned. It was Fiona. She came over lithely, conspiratorially, put her hand on his shoulder: "Digby darling, what terribly bad luck. You do understand I couldn't say anything don't you, Digby?"

"Course," he muttered. "That was the whole point."

"But, Digby darling, please don't go to prison. Please pay the fine even if it is a big one, Digby."

He shook his head. "I won't pay. Grossly unjust."

"Oh but, Digby, I need you for the Gathering I do need you terribly to help me and make the speech you promised and specially now because of your name and everything, oh Digby, you can't let me down now. . . . Please, please, please." She rubbed her cheek against his bristles.

"Okay then." He couldn't resist her. He never had been able to resist wheedling women, Madeleine or any of them.

"Hello," said a voice. They turned. The flash bulb blinded him. "Thanks a lot." It was Carmen Graves, smiling sweetly.

"Now, look here!" growled Digby, jumping up. But she had gone. Fiona went, too. He was called into the courtroom. "I'll pay," he said, and did so on the spot to the Clerk.

Digby stalked alone to the door of freedom. He stepped outside

and walked, to his astonishment, between cheering ranks of rustic Highlanders. "Yon was braw!" they cried. "Man, yon's changed my opinion o' the Yanks. Man, I'm proud o' ye. Guid worrk, mon! Och, I'd hae gi'en a week's wage for to see ye punch 'im. Guid laddie, Digby!" laughing and shouting and slapping him on the back. He was the saviour who had delivered them from the tyranny of McIntoon.

CHAPTER 11

THAT'S *Craig Proctor with Madeleine Ross. Look how attentive he is. Look how she makes him laugh.* Madeleine lay in bed, staring at the clock. A quarter of ten. I must get up soon.

You can't expect Craig to be like other people. You can't expect genius to be ordinary. Nature gives safety valves to the creative spirit. I must remember that.

Digby never had the faintest idea of what love was all about, the truth of it—the battle and the hatred of it in Craig's words. He was just so considerate and polite and perfect always until I could have screamed. But, of course, he could never be any different not in a million years, so dull except for the last evening when he attacked me and said those awful things.

I'm going to pack up all my things today and tomorrow. Oh dear, so many things which are his things and my things, whose things? Then I will decide about Craig and Reno, Reno and Craig.

The telephone. It's sure to be Polly. It was sweet of her to drive me down from Maine. "Hullo."

"Madeleine?"

"Polly, darling!" What's wrong. I wonder? She sounds excited.

"Madeleine, have you seen about Digby in the *Express*?"

"What about Digby?"

"Darling, I hardly like to tell you, but they nearly sent him to prison for being drunk and attacking a policeman in Scotland.

It's Cyrus Becker's column on page seven, and something by Carmen Graves, too, on page thirty-one. Darling, this coming on top of everything, it can't help hardening the emotional block. I do feel for you so much. Shall I bring my copy around?"

She feels for me so much. She gloats for me so much. "No thanks, Polly darling. I have a copy right here."

Where is it? Page seven. Cyrus Becker. I met him twice at the Class Reunion. I didn't like him. Oh!!

Wealthy Ross Corporation President Digby P. Ross . . . Scottish vacation certainly took a lively turn early this morning. . . . Drunk and slugging a cop. . . . Good Heavens! Digby could never do such things. It can't be him. It's impossible. For reasons best known to himself and likely connected with local peach (some beauteous dish, Fiona Kilburnie—a magistrate, too) Ross determined to plead guilty on all counts, so punishment was coming to him.

Presiding blimp magistrate revealed a staggering anti-American bias amounting to phobia in summing up. . . .

Ross—always known hitherto as the politest of stuffed shirts—first shouted he would serve three months' jail sentence. Later persuaded by above magisterial dish to pay twenty-pound (fifty-six dollar) fine. All of which does not let Ross off the hook. This drink-sodden ambassador . . . And so on. Oh dear.

Turn to page thirty-one. Carmen Graves. A picture of Digby, haggard, dishevelled, but unmistakably Digby with a woman, him sitting, her right hand on his shoulder, bending over, their faces close, looking into one another's eyes. Beautiful even in a wired picture.

Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks, intime hostess to Digby P. Ross last night, his lovely if faintly embarrassed co-judge today, the "Bonniest lassie in all Scotland," Chief of her Clan, here gives a woman magistrate's advice to the stricken Ross, says: "Pay fine Digby darling and share freedom's joys." Whatever we may think of rich playboys who can't hold their liquor, we do admire a stickler to quixotic guns. This girl and famed chieftain . . . Physically

a fiery Highland Hayworth and femme fatale, she is . . .

Oh Digby, how could you do that to me, making me a laughing-stock more than ever? But this woman! What's her name? Fiona Kilburnie. I can just see her catching you on the rebound and making you fighting drunk on purpose. I could tear her eyes out. Why pretend any more? Why pretend I like Craig Proctor when in my heart of hearts I think he's an intellectual cry-baby? Poor Digby! I must save him from himself. I must get him back. What shall I do?

I know what I'll do right now. I'll call old Randall Johnson. He's so wise. He'll help me. Murray Hill 2-5340.

"Randall?"

"Madeleine, my dear child. I didn't know you were in town."

"Did you see about Digby in the *Express*?"

"Yeah. Yes, I did. Awkward, eh? Hmmm."

Typically man and non-committal. "Randall, what shall I do?"

A pause at the other end of the line. "Madeleine, do you want me to make soothing uncle-noises, or do you want me to say what I really think?"

"Why, what you really think, of course." He's not going to be mean, is he? Not Randall.

"Right then. Now listen, my dear . . ."

He talked at length, calmly, persuasively. Oh dear, she thought, this isn't what I expected at all. I almost wish I hadn't asked him. I never knew Randall was this way. But I mustn't get angry. "Do you really think so, Randall? Do you think it would work?"

"It may be disastrous advice. Like all great ideas it is full of risk. I'll bet, though, that if you play the part well, you'll have young Digby back at a gallop."

"Do you think I ought to tell him I'm coming?"

"Hmmm. Perhaps better not if you can avoid it. He might try to stop you, or do something hasty with the other woman. Call me if I can help over transportation. I wouldn't be so helpful if I was thirty years younger. Well, there's no fool . . . Good-bye, my dear."

Randall is the kindest person in the world. Thinking of *us*,

not just of Digby. Oh, Digby, if I could only get you back . . . Tweeds? Tweeds to make a Scots woman sit up. Best's, Bonwit Teller's? Right after lunch.

"Transatlantic operator. Can I help you?"

"I want to make a person-to-person call to Scotland . . . I'll spell it . . . I'm afraid I don't know the number. And Operator! Could you say that Mrs. Digby P. Ross wants to make the call at a time when she can speak privately with Colonel Galbraith. This is very important—speak privately with him. Can you do that? Oh, thank you. You'll call me?"

CHAPTER 12

DIGBY stood thigh-deep in the Shepherd's Pool, practising this new art at which he was becoming moderately skilful. *Mr. Ross is a natural-born salmon fisher.* Yes, MacLagan had said that.

He felt serenely happy. His impulse following the trial had been to pack and leave at once. Then suddenly he was struck by the thought of what he would be giving up, and his resolution vanished. There was only one way he could go on seeing Fiona: *deliberately sink his pride and not quarrel with the Colonel.*

Fiona was coming to dinner tonight. I wonder what she'll wear. The green sweater and the kilt? Or the tartan suit? I wonder if I can take her walking after supper without the Colonel?

That awful little man, little chameleon coming home after the trial. *I congratulate you, Digby P., I do wish I'd seen you settle that bobby's hash. A noble effort. We're all proud of you.*

You have an unusual way of showing your pride, Colonel Galbraith.

Come, come, dear boy. Duty is the very devil. It makes slaves out of the best of us. Surely you'd think less of me if I had shown you favour? But 'nuff said as the saying is. Now for a burra peg. Your health, my gallant friend! Salaam aleikum.

And so I drank with him as if bygones were bygones. But I'll get my own back some way, you see if I don't.

Digby made a last cast. No use. "A braw day for all but fishing," as MacLagan had remarked earlier in the afternoon. With Digby's permission he had gone off to mind his traps down by the old dyke. Digby gave up. As he came from the tugging water and climbed the bank, he saw a dark-clothed figure prop his bicycle and walk this way. It was the Reverend Lachlan McLean.

Heavens, Digby thought. He's come to reproach me for my transgressions.

But it was not so. The Minister doffed his hat, shook hands and said: "I saw you fishing so I said to myself I'll just stop and pass the time of day." He was a shy young man, all earnest bones and angles, even a knobbly Adam's apple popping up and down behind his clerical collar.

"How nice of you," said Digby. "Let's have a cigarette."

They smoked beside the noisy river. After a while the Minister glanced covertly around him and spoke: "Mr. Ross, a man of God has no right to be condoning violence, but it seems to me you taught our constable a lesson he's been needing this long while."

Digby laughed. One and all seemed to be on his side.

The Minister cleared his throat, blushed and said: "How does Miss Elspeth seem? Does she seem happy in herself?"

Your solitary holy swain. Digby remembered the Colonel's remark on the hill. "She seems okay," he said carefully. "Of course, she doesn't say much; perhaps she is rather subdued by her father."

"She's hudden doon," said the Minister with vehemence. "Miss Elspeth's a wonderful lassie the way she slaves for her dad, the Colonel, and gets no thanks." He sighed. "You're a man of the world, Mr. Ross. Would you feel willing to advise me?"

Digby smiled at him. "I'd be glad to try," he said. How incongruous that now of all times in his life a clergyman should seek his counsel.

Mr. McLean drew breath. "It's like this, Mr. Ross. You see I've

formed an attachment for Miss Elspeth although no word has passed between us. I dream of her at all times day and night, and I can't help feeling it is sinful to be possessed about a thing that isn't really spiritual however pure. Of course, I'm not worthy to clean the stoor, the dust I mean, from Miss Elspeth's shoes. I ken that fine. And even if she would have me, her dad would never spare her, which worries me again because perhaps a daughter's real duty does lie with her widowed father."

How to give worldly advice to this good and unworldly young man? About Elspeth, too, one of the least attractive ladies he had ever known, his cousin—an excellent cook, a superior knitter, but what else? What lay behind her inscrutable façade?

"I don't think you should worry about the sinful aspect," Digby said. "Happy marriage would make you an even better minister than you are already. As for Colonel Galbraith, he is hale, hearty and by no means destitute. Forget about him except as a possible thorn in your flesh. Now about the lady herself. I know you are a humble man, but my advice is not to be too humble. Elspeth would be just as lucky to have you as you would be to have her, probably more so." Digby repressed a shudder. Quite apart from anything else, think of the Colonel as a father-in-law.

"Now do not seem too eager. Just once or twice you might be disdainful, or appear too preoccupied to notice her. That could work wonders."

A fish jumped high in the farthest part of the pool. Deep water all the way, no chance to wade. It was a tremendously long cast. "I wonder if I might just reach it," Digby said. "No harm in trying."

"What fly do you have on?" asked the Minister. He was a keen fisherman, like everybody else.

"A Silver Doctor."

"You couldn't do better on a bright afternoon."

Digby stood on the edge of the bank. The rod was a long Grant's Vibration, powerful, the very thing for the job. He false-casted his

way across the pool, dropped the point. The fly ringed fifteen feet short. He did not let it sink but drew out still more line, locked that, heaved up and back with all his strength, check—the line looped out behind him. He waited too long, was just too slow in the forward recovery—caught up. “Hell’s bells and damnation!” he said. “Sorry, Minister.”

“It’s very vexing,” said Mr. McLean, going to free the fly. “I doubt there’s only one trick might get you there. Pay out more line yet, and I’ll draw the fly back against you. Cast like the very devil himself when I say the word.”

Digby cast like the very devil. The first time the fly whacked loud as a pistol shot into his felt hat.

“Ca’ canny now,” said the Minister. “I mind once I hooked myself in the cheek. It was a case of cutting it out and two stitches and the scar’s there yet.”

“Caution ne’er stormed a fortress in life’s battle,” cried Digby. “And don’t you forget it, young man, apropos of our recent conversation. Ready?”

“Go!” said the Minister. He was giggling away to himself.

Digby used the last driving ounce of his strength. The barbed Silver Doctor hissed past his ear. Right on the button at the very spot close in below the pale-brown lather of foam where the pool turned against rock.

This salmon did not strike mildly underwater. It attacked the fly like a hungry trout. “Glory be!” shouted Mr. McLean. “Oh, glory on us!” He danced about.

“Tell me what to do.” MacLagan! Where was MacLagan?

The Minister sobered up and told him what to do.

Twenty minutes later the fish was tired. It rolled with a lemon-silver of belly, righted itself, made short lunges, rolled more slowly, hung there in clear deep water, played out, ready for the gaff. But where was the gaff?

“MacLagan must have left it here.”

“It’s no good,” cried McLean. “I’ve searched all over. There’s



no two ways about it. I'll have to go in." He whipped off black jacket, trousers, shoes and socks. Even at this tense moment Digby noticed the incongruity of the gangling priest, clad only in short pants, undervest, dickey and collar. "Bring him round to the sand, Mr. Ross. Slowly now." The Minister waded to his thighs on the sandy patch just this side of fast water.

Digby brought round the fish. McLean waited, stalked, plunged, missed. The reel screamed out. Try again. This time the Minister made no mistake. He was wet from head to foot, but he had the arching salmon clasped to his chest. He clambered out, dispatched it efficiently with a stone, removed the hook and laughed in a very

hearty fashion, not at all lovelorn. "What would my flock say if they saw me now?"

Digby sat down to recover his breath. "My first salmon, and was it wonderful!"

"Fresh-run," the Minister said. "Fifteen pounds is my guess. A man's first salmon is a great thing in his life."

"Mr. McLean," he said. "That was a noble effort. From now on I'm your man. Anything you want done, say the word."

"Please call me Lachlan, Mr. Ross. Or any name you fancy except Padre. But not Padre if you please, because that reminds me of the Colonel. It's very unchristian of me, Mr. Ross, but between ourselves I am not fond of Colonel Galbraith. He is hard on Miss Elspeth, and he is inclined to be sarcastic with me and about the aims of the Church."

"My limited experience tells me that Galbraith responds only to rough treatment," Digby said. "Which is what I was going to suggest to you. Any trouble with him—pocket your principles and give him hell—plain and unvarnished. It's the only hope."

Lachlan shook his head doubtfully. He began to dress. "You know, Mr. Ross, you are grateful to me for capturing your fish, but the truth is I enjoyed it. For all my battles with myself, the atavistic urges lie very near the top. I'm not worthy to be a Minister of the Gospel!"

Digby reclined in the sun. "I should say that you're a very Christian man," he remarked lazily. "But if you really want to win Elspeth's hand, then you must allow a little of the Adam to peep out. Don't forget what I'm saying."

"Indeed I won't," said the young Minister. "Cheerio then, Mr. Ross, and thank you." He mounted his bicycle and rode off.

Digby returned to the house. Fiona's car was not outside. He went in. He could hear the Colonel's voice droning from the direction of the smoking-room. Talk, talk, what a gasbag! Must go and tell him about the salmon. The French windows were open; the voice came from outside. Digby stopped half-way.

"I can't express what a relief, dear lady," he was saying, "what a great pleasure it is to have you with us, a load off my mind, not that he isn't wonderfully well all things considered. It reminds me of one time my dear wife was spending the summer up at Simla. . . ."

Digby did not toy with his suspicion. He went out. Madeleine and Colonel Galbraith sat side by side in deck-chairs on the croquet lawn. She turned. "Hullo, Digby," she said. She wore a coat and skirt of very bright tweed, a pair of shoes like Fiona's, only brown. She was bare-headed, a totally different hair-do of the windswept kind. "I just couldn't resist coming to this divine country."

CHAPTER 13

"**H**ULLO," said Digby. Surprise and outrage struggled in him. He very nearly turned on his heel and walked back to the house. But he mastered himself. *She's your wife*, his code said; common sense told him to beware the Colonel. He made a very smart decision. He bent and kissed Madeleine on the forehead.

"Isn't this the most delightful wow you ever heard of?" The Colonel was bouncing with bonhomie and good cheer, his eyes shrewd little marbles. "Go and get yourself a drink," he said kindly. "And you might top me up, too, young feller. Half and half. Oh, by the way, Digby P., there's a piece all about us in some paper your wife brought. It's on the table."

Why did she come? To fetch me back? What else could it be? And that meddling old fool must have been in on it! I'll send her home on the next plane. I'll teach her!

The New York *Express* was open at Cy Becker. The first reading was a shock, but after the second, things suddenly seemed far too bad to matter. Indeed, they were funny. *Presiding blimp magistrate* was good, and *drink-sodden ambassador* was all right, too. From anger, Digby passed to hearty laughter. Madeleine's arrival

was explained. Any minute now she would put on a finely dramatized wife-to-the-rescue act. He poured the drinks and carried them outside. "Becker certainly went to town on you, Colonel."

"You betcha! I haven't been in the papers, except the *Citizen*, for ages, and never in America, I'll wager. Did you see your own likeness? It's farther on."

Digby found the picture. "Good of Fiona," he said blandly. "I wouldn't exactly say it does *me* justice." He watched Madeleine's eyes. The lashes might have flickered or they might not. He did not care what she said or looked or thought, yet he did not want to be more unkind to her than was necessary. Poor Madeleine, quite shattered by events.

"We had the loveliest flight up from Prestwick," she said. "Lord Balgersho took me over Loch Tay and Kenmore. Do you remember the poem Burns wrote on the chimney piece of the inn, Colonel Galbraith? One of his best, I always think:

"Th' outstretching lake, imbosomed 'mong the hills,
The eye with wonder and amazement fills:
The Tay meandering sweet in infant pride
The Palace rising on his verdant side . . .

and so on and so on. I adore it."

What's this? Burns: She said he was a . . . Oh, ho! "Not too bad," Digby said. "Not too bad a rhyme at all for a lustful ploughman."

The Colonel sprang to his feet, deeper crimson. "Now look here, Digby P.," he snarled. "That's a bit over the odds. I won't have Burns called a lustful ploughman." He was trembling with anger. "Do you hold nothing sacred?"

"Not a thing," said Digby. "I'm only a Yankee bum. Calm yourself, Colonel!"

Galbraith muttered and sat down. The tension eased off. It was another glorious evening. Madeleine sighed. "Heavenly!" she said. "Lord Balgersho promised to take me fishing tomorrow. I'm simply dying to have a rod in my hands. Is that his river?"

"No," explained the Colonel. "That's the Kil. Fiona has the right bank. I have the left. Balgersho's river Bal is a tributary of the Kil, or vice versa according to which way you look at it. They join over there beyond a place we call the Bloody Gorge."

"The Bloody Gorge," she said musingly. "What a fierce name."

"It was the scene of a massacre," Digby said. *My massacre in a small way when you come down to it, he thought.* "Talking of rivers, Colonel, I killed a salmon this afternoon, fourteen and a half, in the Shepherd's Pool."

"Hot dog!" cried the Colonel with tremendous enthusiasm. "Bravo, young feller. You've shot grouse, you've killed a fish—didn't put a hook into anyone, did you? Nothing remains now but a stag. *Watch out!* they'll all be roaring in the forest. *Here comes Digby P. in his rubber boots.* Well, we must celebrate this fresh triumph. Mrs. Ross—Madeleine, if you'll allow an old feller to call you by your charming name—let me get you a sweetener, not that such a thing is possible." He was indescribably arch.

He took his own glass, too. The Colonel started with pink gins at 11 a.m., rested briefly after luncheon, and soaked whisky until midnight. You could not say that alcohol affected him. He was equally ebullient and intolerable at breakfast as at dinner.

"How nice of you to come," Digby said to her alone. He was annoyed again because it was a breach of good taste to arrive like this. And what was this new game, the tweeds, the brogues, the love of Burns, the thirst for sport—what were these in aid of? He was suspicious.

The Colonel was back. "There you are, my dear. I do hope you're going to be happy. We rough it a bit, but I'm glad to say that things are looking up. I managed to charter a cook, Mrs. Moloney from Dublin town. She took up residence this very day, bearing the highest of references. It'll be a nice change from Elspeth's stodge, even if in my sad experience I have found that life with cook nowadays is apt to be a brief honeymoon. However, it will free Elspeth for some much needed housework." He was in high spirits.

"I think I'll take a bath now," Digby said, eager to get away.

"This is a gala night," called the Colonel after him. "Full fig, Digby P. Dinner jackets! Do give us a break by donning your tuxedo." Digby went up to dress.

Fiona was there when he went downstairs. She was sitting moodily in an arm-chair. But wonder of wonders and joy of joys, she wore no trace of Highland costume. Tonight she wore a short evening gown of flaming saffron, held aloft by some miracle of counterpoise or thrust below her bare brown shoulders. It was a dress in a million, a brain-child out of Captain Molyneux, Jacques Fath, Christian Dior and Madame Schiaparelli, all the great ones, an inspired quintessence.

"Let's have a look at you." He took her by the hands.

She did not smile, but suffered herself to stand. He drank of her beauty—the gleaming auburn mane, brushed and brushed by Nanny, the satin tan of skin, the green and sulky eyes, the splendid semi-captive bounty, the dress a sheath then flowing down away and out so gaily from the hips, the tangy whisper of Tabu—his, bought by late whim at Idlewild.

He gathered her into his embrace. "You're marvellous. You're not of this world."

"What's this about your wife?" she hissed. "What gudgey capers is she up to?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. It doesn't make any difference."

Footsteps on the gravel. Digby moved away, not too far, just casually in the manner of an accomplished villain.

It was Balgersho. "Hullo," he said. "I say, Queenie, you'll be blowing your tops'ls if you don't look out. No tantrums now. That's exactly what would do it. Hullo, Digby."

"I hate you and yer blether," Fiona snarled. It did for a moment seem that she must blow her topsails. But no. Her breathing eased.

Balgersho made a noble figure—brown velvet doublet, bright dress kilt of many colours, golden-tasselled badger sporran, polished

waist-belt, diced hose red and white, skean-dhu tucked into hose below a stalwart knee, silver-buckled shoes, ceremonial dirk at hip, the careless elegance of lace at throat and wrist. Crowning it all, his own leashed amiable arrogance. Once more that queer poetic muse struck Digby, with an adaptation of a favourite poem: *Highland Chieftain on the spree, cock of the walk to eternity.*

I must be careful Digby thought. I must take a grip and observe the proprieties and try to keep my eyes off Fiona. I really must out of fairness to Madeleine, poor Madeleine.

But here she was. She might for the daytime have adopted a guise of the prickly tweeds, the lumbering footwear she despised. Not for this gala night though. By coincidence, or by some woman's envious imitative intuition, Madeleine also wore a short and strapless evening gown. Hers was the deepest shade of wine. It, too, stayed in suspension by the miracles of artifice and nature. Her shoulders were ivory perfection, her black hair groomed to a glowing gloss.

But what a difference! The warm opulence of the one against the cool constraint, the smart city sophistication of the other. Absurdly, Digby felt pleasure, felt a bolstering of his ego that he in plain black evening clothes—not Hamish bedizened with fanciful regalia—that he should be the master of these beauties, both at the full splendour of their womanhood.

"Madeleine," he heard his own voice say. "I don't think you've met Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks."

Madeleine smiled. She left you cold, but she did wear graces. "How d'you do," she said, and shook Fiona's hand. "I've been looking forward to meeting you."

"Welcome," said Fiona, also friendly. "Welcome to our Highlands, Mistress Ross." In a lesser person that might have been far-fetched, grandiloquent. With Fiona it was right; it was the expression of her heritage.

They parted, and Madeleine accepted sherry, and Hamish prowled over. "That dress suits you," he said, looking down at

her, so abrupt and different from his nonchalant habit, like the rough summons of a courting python.

Madeleine blushed. "Thank you," she said, regaining composure. "I do love lace, and are those really knives, those wicked-looking things?" She touched his dirk, and pointed down to skean-dhu. He drew them one by one to show her.

"Oh, a fork, too. How darling!"

Elsbeth appeared, dumpy as ever in a floor-length gown of mauve chiffon, all rolls and bulges, followed by the Colonel. "Hullo everybody," said Galbraith. He was dressed up, too, but not with lace. The gong sounded. "Let's make a good impression on Mother Moloney's first night."

Fiona and Madeleine led the way through the wide doors, followed by Elspeth, Digby, Hamish, the Colonel. "Sit in the place of honour, Madeleine my dear," so kind and courtly. "Fiona, you on my left. Digby at Elspeth's fair right hand. Hamish, take the remaining pew." They sat down.

"What delicious soup," said Madeleine. "I don't think I know it."

"Hare soup, made from the blood of the blue hare."

Digby glanced across. The very mention of gore would make her shudder. "Really?" she said, and drank the rest. "I guess food must be a terrible problem with your tiny rations, Colonel Galbraith. I do think you people in this old island have shown such wonderful grit and patience."

"Call me Farquhar, m'dear, I wish you would—or Farquie. I feel I know you well already."

"You're the sweetest person." Could this be Madeleine?

Elsbeth took away the plates. Fiona fiddled with her table-knife. Balgersho smiled at ease.

"As for rationing, it does trouble them a lot in the outside world, I believe, not that I ever go. But here in this neck of the woods we get along famously. The buxom ox, the odd sheep, the peach-fed porker, the side of bacon, who's to tell? No, if I say it myself, we run some splendid rackets." In swept the cook. Mrs. Moloney was

a big woman, a striking grey-haired lady of about fifty; in her starched white housecoat she reminded you of a battleship steaming majestically into harbour. She bore a silver platter, on that a mighty sizzling roast of beef. She placed it before the Colonel.

His eyes gleamed. "Oh, by Jove I say Mrs. Moloney this is capital. Did you ever see such a sirloin?" He stood, rasped carver expertly twice along steel, then sliced as smooth as butter down across the undercut. "Just right. I hope you're hungry, Madeleine."

"Sure and they're hungry the pretty ladies and the pretty gentlemen in kilts. Says I to meself, Bridget Moloney, says I, it's a pure delight to be cooking again for a military man like Colonel Galbraith. He's a gentleman will be loving the blessing of good food."

Mrs. Moloney's deep Irish voice was lovelier than the Scots. She took round the plates. She had an indulgent word for everyone. She stood at her new master's side until he, too, had sampled a mouthful of tender beef, dark gravy, Yorkshire pudding, green peas, roast potatoes, horseradish sauce.

"Mistress Moloney, it's perfection. I haven't eaten food like this for years."

She beamed. You could see how she doted already on the Colonel's stomach. It was precious to her; nobody else's stomach really mattered.

It was decidedly the Colonel's evening. "Happy days are here again, touch wood and cross my fingers. Now we'll have a toast for a special occasion because I don't believe I ever in all my life sat down two such visions of beauty—our Highland Queen and our New World Queen, the fair one and the dark one, the warm dumb one and the clever cool one."

But the Colonel's tongue had got the better of him again. As he attributed these qualities each to its owner by gestures of his pudgy hand, both the lovely faces showed displeasure.

Fiona bared her teeth. "You're a haver. I often was top in gym and singing."

Madeleine frowned a very little. "Good heavens, Farquie," she

murmured. "Don't call *me* an intellectual type. I'm completely physical and dumb. I'm sure Fiona's far far cleverer than me."

"Sorry," said the Colonel. "Eloquence is my enemy. All I meant was that you're both wonderful; I'm quite sure Digby and Hamish will agree. Mud in your eyes, you fascinating creatures."

The men and poor Elspeth stood to drink.

After beef it was meringues, cream from the home farm, raspberries from the garden. A simple succulent feast fit for the quality of Scotland and America.

Hamish had not spoken much. He now captured Madeleine from her host. "What time shall we start tomorrow? I'll fly over for you."

"Any time, Hamish. I'm such an early bird. I'll be ready whenever you say. Oh, I'm looking forward to the fishing and everything so much. Could we go up the mountains too?"

"Easily. Come to think of it, if the river's in ploy, which I think it will be, and we get a fish, I don't see why we mightn't try for a stag in the afternoon."

"It's too early for a stag," put in Fiona with sharp disapproval.

"There's no close season. They're mine, not yours. You look after your Royal pets, Queenie, and leave my stags to me."

It was unkind the way Balgersho said it. He might even be very slightly angry. You couldn't tell. But it was certainly annoying the way this guy she cordially disliked could get the better of her every time—and you never could.

"Digby P. hasn't tried for a stag yet," said the Colonel, peacemaker. "It would hardly do for Madeleine to beat him to it. I say, Fiona, why don't you pocket your principles and take old Digby out tomorrow and make a competition of it? See if the Birks can beat Balgersho! Mixed doubles, America and Scotland. Oh, do! It's a magnificent conception."

What devilry was this? But it might be a marvellous outcome to your problem.

He shot a quick glance at Fiona. *Say yes, Fiona.*

This time she did heed him. Or perhaps she would always throw down the gauntlet to Balgersho. Whatever the reason, she said calmly: "My plans for the Gathering are all made. Och yes, we'll take you on and beat you. The best head wins the competition."

"Okay," said Balgersho. "But no tame staggies in the park, remember."

"You mentioned a gathering," said Madeleine, leaning across. "A Gathering of the Clans? Why, how exciting!"

"Just the one clan," Fiona said with a proud pout. "The Gathering of Clan Kilburnie! The day after tomorrow my clansmen will come from the four corners of the earth to pay me homage. And it's all arranged—down to the last wee item: the buffet lunch, the Birks Royal Whisky, the massed pipers and the dancing, the lawns all cut, the throne on Chieftain's Rock. I did everything and Digby helped me. He's to march at my side in the procession and make a speech. It's a special honour to America."

There was a chorus of surprise at this, hitherto a closely guarded secret. Fiona revealed it now with much the same air as a Cabinet Minister who lets the cat out of the bag about the atom bomb or the spaceship—a trifle guilty afterwards, but proudly defiant.

"Digby is always making speeches," Madeleine said in the nicest possible nasty way. "Such clever ones about dams and things. Miles over my head."

"You'd better watch out, old boy," Balgersho put in, "or Queenie will have you playing the pipes."

"I tell you what," said the Colonel, entering the breach. "Why don't we have a foursome after coffee? I'll play and you four dance. Elspeth, find my pipes."

"What a darling idea!" cried Madeleine. "I long to do your Highland dances."

So, in a while they danced a foursome reel upon the lawn. Colonel Galbraith was a good piper of the apoplectic never-quite-bursting type. His jowls and throat swelled enormously; he spanked the bag, went for brief walks, stopped to lick his reed,

fiddled with clanking drones till all three drones squealed harmoniously to his satisfaction. He was ready.

They went into the lovely rhythm of the Strathspey. Digby lumbered through it, pulled here and thrust there by Fiona. She was a heavenly dancer. Madeleine made a woman's light-footed compromise with the strange steps contriving to be graceful. Balgersho was magnificent in the hurrying scurry of the reel-time, arms high, kilt flying, legs twinkling in a flurry of double ball-cuts, his yells the savage calling of his blood. It was pagan and impressive.

"How glorious," cried Madeleine, face flushed, when they finished. "I could dance and dance all night." She kicked off her shoes, threw her arms wide, pirouetted, and bounded all the way along the croquet lawn with skips and jumps and scampers like a ballerina, then sank at last in a deep curtsey to the Colonel.

"Bravo!" he said, bending to kiss her hand in courtly fashion. "By Jove, the most graceful thing I ever saw." Good God! Digby thought. She's gone crazy.

"That's not real dancing," Fiona muttered. "That's only bally."

The evening broke up soon after. Madeleine walked with Hamish to his plane. Digby saw Fiona to her car.

"She isn't as nice as I am, is she?" said Fiona when they could not be seen from the house. "She hasn't got near as braw a figure, has she Digby?"

"No," he growled. They kissed.

He pushed her to the top of the hill. She chugged away. Madeleine had retired. The Colonel was still lapping whisky. Digby went to bed.

CHAPTER 14

THEY climbed all day. It seemed to Digby that he had toiled uphill for ever, that there was nothing but ascent, that there would always be a higher crest beyond.

They had seen many beasts; none that satisfied Fiona. No,

she would mutter, steadying the telescope against her stick, *a good ten-pointer, but he wouldn't win.*

She wore a jacket with the kilt; her hair was gathered in a dark green kerchief; she hardly spoke. *Come away then*, was about all she said, closing the telescope with hollow snap, leading the way to still higher places. He trailed along behind, carrying the rifle. He was tired and hot and a bit fed-up. It isn't for me she wants the stag, he thought sourly. Oh no! It's to win a skirmish in the eternal feud with Balgersho.

But now at last the true summit of McKercher was in view. She drew open the telescope and wriggled forward on her front to spy between rocks. Suddenly her legs drummed up and down, one two three four times like a swimmer's crawl, expressive. "Here, Digby," she breathed. "Leave the rifle."

He edged up with binoculars. He saw the stag at once. It lay in a corrie, a small flat place on the ridge that fell south from the crest of McKercher. It lay broadside, but the head faced north—downwind—turning very slowly from side to side. Six points—or was it seven?—on one antler, six on the other, a wide-sweeping head. The stag rested wary but unsuspecting at the very march, the boundary watershed between the hills of Kilburnie and the hills of Balgersho.

"Four hundred yards," she murmured. "Too far for you." She wriggled back. "Follow me." She was calm and intent.

He followed her, walking when she walked, crouching when she crouched, crawling when she crawled. The moss was cold. The stones were sharp. All at once Fiona froze. "Rest till you get your breath. Mind now, aim low behind the shoulders. It's two hundred yards from here. If he's still lying I'll try to put him up. Hold straight, Digby!"

They were in a steep gully. He crawled up the side, slowly, inch by inch, his right eye round a rock. The stag was still lying.

He listened to her moving higher up the gully making hardly any noise, which was miraculous with nailed shoes on rock. She

does everything better than everybody. He waited, rifle in shoulder, finger at trigger guard, ready to fire, pulse a little fast but holding steady. The stag's head still turned its watchful sweep. A flutter of white up the gully, a handkerchief. The stag had also seen; the nose came higher. It stood, broadside. It was the stag of Fiona's silver brooch, but in living colour—pale nose, dark swelling ruff and back, light flanks, antlers gleaming. It was magnificent. Digby took aim—just behind the shoulders, a low aim, sights steady. He began the final squeeze.

The shot sounded in a first sharp crack, then echoed from the corrie. The stag stiffened, crumpled and lay dead. It had not moved a yard.

Digby took his forefinger from the trigger. He heard the clatter of Fiona's shoes. She leapt the gully as nimbly as a chamois. Her face spoke boundless pride and pleasure. "Oh, Digby darling!"

"It wasn't me," he said in stupefaction. "I didn't fire."

"*What?*"

Fiona cursed and swore in a torrent of venomous vituperation such as Digby had rarely heard from the lips of man or woman. Navy language learned at Oban.

"Sssh," he whispered. A man loped across the corrie and stood for a moment, hands on hips, wearing that unmistakable swash-buckling elegance, looking down at the stag. Then he turned his black head and called: "Come on, Madeleine!" loud and clear.

"Gimme that rifle!" growled Fiona. She was white under tan, her mobile face working, nostrils dilated. She stretched across.

"Steady!" said Digby. This wouldn't do, not murder or mayhem. He put an arm around her shoulder, raised his binoculars with his spare hand.

Madeleine came into view; she joined Balgersho. You might know her tweeds were lately bought in a New York store but she wore them to this manner born. They fitted and she fitted.

"Good shot, Madeleine," he said. The words came over the wind with the amused approving tone of his voice.



She laughed up at him. He moved quickly and in character—seized her near hand, spun her, as a ballet dancer spins his partner, into his arms, kissed her by force. She seemed to struggle. Then she did not struggle. Her arms stole up around his neck. She rose on tiptoe. She never kissed me like that, thought Digby.

Hamish left her, drew a hunting knife, took the stag by one antler, raised the head, and plunged his knife into the base of the throat. Dark blood poured. He turned swiftly, and ran a bloody finger down one of Madeleine's cheeks and then the other, meeting at the chin.

"Have to blood you for your first stag. Should be the whole face, but I let you off with a token." He laughed again. He was a splendid scamp of a fellow. "Go away while I do the gralloch." She went.

Fiona's colour had come back. "Gudgey!" she ranted, but quietly. "Gudgey! Gudgey! Gudgey!" It was a violently opprobrious word of her own, more expressive than all her standard oaths. "See yon white rock? That's the march. The stag's head was our side when she fired. Gudgey poachers!" Digby saw the white rock. He also saw that the hind part of the stag lay unquestionably on Balgersho ground. The imaginary line—a thing of length and no thickness—bisected the dead beast. It was a rare case, and perhaps there would be a Highland law about it. Madeleine had poached the head; he himself would have poached the tail. He might have pointed this out to Fiona, but she was not in the mood to welcome such a statement.

"Let's beat it," Digby said. He was a man of peace. It would be awkward if they disclosed themselves.

"It's her as much as him I mind," she said as they retreated. "It's her like a soft carnation out of a greenhouse." This was Fiona's only reference to Madeleine. "I can't abide women," she remarked in general. "And I can't abide that stinker Hamish, and you let me down, too, Digby—panting and puffing and wasting time needing to get your breath." She scowled, picked up a bit

of quartz and threw it smack, splinter against rock. Fiona was far too untamed to be a good loser.

They walked on down over the bleak moss and lichen of high altitude, walked again on grass, came at length to heather.

"Come sit, it's sheltered here," he said, and she sat down beside him. Action was what she understood, not words. He drew her kerchief off. Her hair tumbled out and about and around. Honey bees worked busily nearby; the south wind spoke above; the August sun struck warmly.

"You smell of heather and you and a suspicion of Tabu."

"D'you mean to say rhymes so often, Digby?"

"Just happens to me. Just happens like you happen to me, Fiona. Never used to."

"Digby," a few minutes later. "Let's get married, and you can do up the Birks for me and be my Ian Prissitulchan. D'you know how many sons Fiona had by Ian?"

"No clue."

"Seven! And I'm only thirty Digby so I could easily manage seven if you could. But I don't want any gudgey girls. I'd drown them. I just want sons and sons and sons I bet I would too."

It was one of the things about Fiona, that you couldn't imagine her with daughters.

"Do you love me, Digby?"

"I'm crazy about you." Oh, this question women always ask, even Fiona.

"Digby, there's something I want to ask you. Please wear the kilt tomorrow. Daddy was your size, I know his kilt would fit."

"No." He was firm.

Nevertheless, sometime later, he stood before a mirror at the Birks and suffered Nanny's chalkings and pinnings while she crooned to herself and him: "Just a half-inch all round, mebbe three-quarters at the back. Och, Mr. Ross has a rare outstanding build for the kilt. The jacket—sleeves out an inch, and more room in the ocksters. And the bonnet's ower ticht for comfort. I'll open

the back a wee thing. There now!" She stood back and surveyed him with pride. Fiona was in high good humour. She had forgotten all about the stag. Digby looked in the mirror. He hated the idea; and yet this kilt certainly suited him. He admired himself and made deprecating coy comments.

"The knees are a bit white," Fiona doubted.

"I'll soon sort yon," said Nanny. "I've a bottle up the stair."

"Now walk up and down, Digby."

He did so, over to the row of Fiona's kilted dolls, back to fat indulgent Nanny, over and back. "Give it a sort of jerk, Digby, like a punch back and a sway out from that buttock each time you put your foot down. Watch me! That's much better. That's fine. Now when you stand, put the left heel into the right instep and bend the left knee. My goodness you're a quick learner."

"I'll only wear this kilt on condition that you say nothing about it beforehand, and that I can take it off right away after the Gathering."

"Darling, of course you can take it off the very moment after."

"The new bike is the bonniest I ever had, and three speeds an' a'. Mr. Ross is a kind good chentleman, the very man for my bebbie, I'm thinkin'." Nanny went away.

"Oh, I'm so terribly specially happy you gave way about the kilt. Come here, Digby."

He kissed her. "I must get back now. What time shall I come tomorrow?"

"Twelve-thirty would be fine. I'm sleepy, Digby. I think I'll have a snooze. Good-bye if you have to go."

BACK AT GLENDROGAN he parked in the shade of the copper beech, and sat there while the wind died at evening, brooding over the speech he had so recklessly promised to deliver on the morrow. Grey limbs and twigs eased in their swaying overhead; leaves danced a chinked lighthearted measure.

A day of great physical effort, he reflected, and a good deal of

it wasted. The intellectual effort still remains to do. I feel it ready to go in my fanciful head and in my tired body, too. All I need now is the key to unlock the door to set me composing at a gallop. *The theme*: Clan Kilburnie. *The protagonist*: Our glorious chieftain. *The watchword*: Inspiration. But how?

Balgersho's plane glided in and side-slipped like a winged crab to land across the field. He could take off round corners. Peer of the realm and peerless pilot, and you ought to be very cross indeed at him for dallying with your wife. Good old Fiona wanting to be unofficially engaged. Sometimes she could be quite like her ordinary sisters. The plane roared away.

Madeleine came up towards the front door. She was limping badly, and her mouth twitched at each step. Despite this, the message of her face, flushed from the sun and wind, was an abstracted pleasure.

"Hullo there," he called, getting out of the car. "Bad blisters?"

Madeleine started, then looked at him. "Hullo, Digby," she said as if he were some casual acquaintance; then her face brightened. "I did the hat-trick. It was worth the blisters. I got a royal stag and a grouse and a twelve-pound salmon."

He didn't mind the stag. But the hat-trick? No, he wasn't so pleased about that.

"Congratulations," he said. "You've certainly taken to the sporting life like a duck to water, bit of a lame duck perhaps. I see you washed that blood off."

She stared at him, then blushed in a warm guilty tide. It was most becoming. It reminded him of long ago, of the time when they were courting and not yet engaged and how she would always blush if they met at parties or even anywhere at all.

Why didn't it work out? Was it my fault for being Digby Prissy? Was it my fault she turned into a bogus frigid intellectual? But she wasn't exactly frigid with Balgersho. That could have been an act, too. Everything could be a ham-actor's act with Madeleine, he thought bitterly.

He laughed and said, "I was a privileged spectator. I hope you had a swell time."

"I hope you had a swell time, too." Her lips trembled. Perhaps with a smile or perhaps not. She limped slowly to the house, turned at the door, stuck her tongue out at him and said: "You poor old red-nosed sucker."

Her Fifth Avenue rustic appearance, her sickening behaviour with the Colonel, her dancing around the lawn, her lust for the chase, her dumb remarks, even her behaviour on the summit of Ben McKercher—all these could be woman's tricks. But to call him a *poor old red-nosed sucker*! Why, it was plain crazy. Why, it was a word she shuddered even to hear. *I do wish you wouldn't use those common expressions, Digby*. Sticking her tongue out, too. It was like the Bishop standing in the pulpit and starting his sermon: *Hiya, suckers*! He stood fingering his nose which was painfully fiery from too much sun among the heather.

CHAPTER 15

DIGBY paused. He heard the long sigh of the Kilburnies. They sat around the granite amphitheatre walls—lads in kilts and tartaned lassies, men in suits and summery women, old ones and young, folks from Scotland, exiles from across the border, pilgrims from beyond the oceans, all of them come here to the meeting place of Clan Kilburnie, to renew on this one day an ancient fealty. They bore marks of the lands of their adoption, marks of climate and custom—lean leathery Antipodeans, ebullient rainbows from America, sturdy Canucks—yet all one family today, joined in heart and spirit to their chieftain.

Fiona had never looked so beautiful. Her blouse was a simple thing of snowy silk, neckline plunging to the brooch, that silver sentinel. Kilt, nylons, shoes, quite plain and perfect. Let lesser beauties wear the frills.

The pipers had played their marches, pibrochs, reels, Strathspeys, all culminating in the Clan Quickstep—"The Bonny Birks O' Burnie." The dancers had done sword-dance, broadswords, reels, shiun triubhas and fling. Fiona had received her clansmen, from patriarchs to little tots. It was a Kilburnie from the south of France who set the fashion for the men. He bowed low to kiss her hand. The idea caught on like wildfire; soon everyone was doing it, gauchely or gallantly according to his bent, or according to consumption of Birks Royal Whisky. But there was no rowdiness. Fiona's own mood of queenly dignity lay over every step of the proceedings.

The luncheon, piping, dancing—all that was over. A few minutes ago she had stood beside him on Chieftain's Rock, the high place where only he had been invited, and she said: *Now the time is come to call upon our kinsman from America, the last bearer of a famous name, the great Digby Prissitulchan Ross.* Cheers volleyed, echoed, died.

He told them the story of the Bloody Gorge. He told it in the poem which had poured torrentially out of his brain through fingers to his pen last night. The words were still so vivid that he had not glanced at the copy in his hand.

He paused midway to watch rapt faces, to feel silence, to taste the witchery; then spoke again.

Are these my words? he thought, hearing his voice sail on now to the end. *Can this be me, an American executive named Ross?*

He finished. Nobody stirred. Even the standard hung inert.

Digby put the copy in his sporran, which had a handy pocket, and took Fiona's hand. She rose to stand beside him. With his left hand he made a small gesture of command, palm upward, fingers spread. The whole assembly stood.

"On your behalf I dedicate these words to another Fiona, another chieftain." He held her hand high. "To our glorious Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks." Then Digby kissed her long slim fingers which were like all things about her—wonderful and

ambivalent, strongly supple in the hunt, softly supple in caress.

"BRAW KILBURNIE!" the clan motto, shouted in homage. And again: "BRAW KILBURNIE!"

She smiled at him. "Och, thank you, Digby," inclining her head, the good Queen Bess to Essex sort of thing. That nod was blessing, thanks, dismissal.

He knew his place. He stepped into the background, leaving her alone on the main pinnacle of Chieftain's Rock, facing tumultuous plaudits from her clan. Cheer after cheer rang and resounded and sped against the hills.

Nobody heard the approach of a small blue monoplane along the glen. One moment triumphant human voices shouting in strong harmony—the next a rasping over-riding blatter of this tortured age.

Digby drew breath. He watched Fiona. He saw her body stiffen, hands clench at her sides, the arm muscles rounding.

Oh dear, he thought, jerked out of his exultant dream. *Here's that damned four-flusher gonna ball things up.*

Lord Balgersho did just this. First he buzzed Chieftain's Rock at zero feet straight for the hillside, standing on his tail at the ultimate split-second, fading in a stall turn, quite unbelievably dangerous to himself and them. Digby longed to dive down flat upon the rock, but he could not do so honourably, for Fiona stood with squared shoulders, not yielding an inch even when the backwash threw auburn hair awry. She was magnificent.

Balgersho then did every trick in his incomparable repertoire: loops, slow rolls, vertical turns, stalls and sickening spins, dives, falling leaves—all this within, over and round the rock walls of the amphitheatre, while most of the Kilburnies lay flat. It was a superb free exhibition of stunt flying.

He finished with one of his side-slips, so steep that you could hear the whine of air on wings, righted the plane, throttled back to a near-stall, and followed the circle of prostrate Kilburnies. As he did so, a white fluttering shower of paper streamed from the

right-hand window and floated slowly, prettily, down to earth.

The plane flew round at eye level to Chieftain's Rock. Digby was amazed to see a woman's face through the open cabin window, and a pair of hands still busily expelling paper. As she went past at forty miles per hour, Madeleine looked very pale.

"A-a-ch-ch," he heard Fiona spit. Then the blue plane was gone.

Madeleine! he thought. *Madeleine who's airsick at the least bump. Madeleine who hates flying. Why, the madman might have killed her! She's nuts. She's altogether cuckoo.*

Before the small-engined roar had died, Kilburnies came to life. They sat up, stood, looked round with slack shocked faces, perhaps not sure whether the terrifying display had been a surprise item in the programme. Then they grasped at the relief of action. Each and everyone picked up a piece of paper.

Digby collected two. "Gimme!" snarled Fiona. The tip of her nose was pale, nostrils dilated, always a dangerous sign.

He put one in her hand, looked at the other. It was a single sheet, a pamphlet such as is dropped on enemy countries in time of war, but with a different purpose. Those have as aim political seduction—this aimed at mortal insult. A six-inch piece of paper bearing a single picture—it was the golden stag of Fiona's brooch, of the Kilburnie Standard, broadside, head turned. The nose was a daub of vivid red. Underneath were these lines:

Oh Prissy with your nose so bright
Why don't you ride my bike tonight?

Pratap College
SRINAGAR

It was a monstrous insult to Kilburnie; it was a monstrous insult to him. Digby instinctively felt his nose—not usually red; it never had been a red nose except on rare occasions when it peeled; true, it was peeling now.

Digby knew what he was going to do; he was going to square up to Hamish Balgersho, so-called peer and baron; he was going to bust him wide open.

A growl ran round the amphitheatre. The Kilburnies could not

know the full purport of what they saw and read; they knew about Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, though; they knew this for sacrilege.

Fiona crushed her pamphlet, threw it away, spread both arms high as in the letter U of semaphore. Her short sleeves fell back to the tanned ripple of her shoulders. Silence fell at once.

Now, as never before, she was the angry priestess. "Yon was Tarr!" she cried. "The curséd Tarr of Balgersho!" Her arms were wonderfully graceful and expressive, flung wide, flung high. "Form up! All able-bodied men get in the ranks!"

She bounded tempestuously two steps at a time down into the arena. Digby followed. Every strong male Kilburnie, even some older men, came at the double and formed two ranks.

"Bairns and womenfolk bide here!" their Chieftain cried. "Pipes in the lead till we reach the Bloody Gorge. Revenge!"

"Revenge!" they answered deeply. An ancient never-forgotten grudge leaped into flame.

"Prissitulchan at my side. March on Balgersho! Left turn. Quick march!"

The pipers broke into the "Bonny Birks O' Burnie"; the drums gave tart emphasis of measure, the column swung out of the arena, down past the East Tower of the Birks. Three miles to the Gorge, a mile beyond—four miles in all to do, a good hour's march. Fiona marched like a soldier, or perhaps a sailor—shoulders square, chest out, arms swinging to regulation height.

Digby did not feel self-conscious in his kilt, for kilts were in the majority today. He practised the lesson she had taught him, jutting each buttock with an aggressive thrust which made him feel tremendously a Highland man. He was a quick learner.

At the village crossing a policeman stood, none other than Constable McIntoon. He sprang to attention, saluted sharply. Poor old McIntoon, thought Digby. I don't bear *him* a grudge. But what was this? Farther on two more familiar figures at the roadside. *I've changed my mind. Don't believe I will come, Digby P.*

I wouldn't want to put you off your stroke. Speak well, my boy.
Quite respectful.

Tall bearded MacLagan, short fat Colonel. The former raised his fisherman's hat, bowed gravely. The latter suddenly clicked heels, jack-knifed his right arm up and out to Nazi salute, the image of some corpulent Gauleiter. "Heil Ross!" he shouted.

Fiona growled. The Gorge lay close ahead, black and forbidding. Just about here, this must be the place where the first Fiona and her Prissitulchan had taken love's young excursion by the river.

One mile to go. I bet she burns Balgersho to the ground, thought Digby. That at the very least. No killings though, I hope.

"Halt!" called Fiona. She looked at Digby, yet through him, too. Her bosom heaved under the silken blouse; the sun shone through her hair. This was the symbolic moment.

"Play the 'Bonny Birks,'" she called and waited for pipes and drums to form by the roadside. "Quick march!"

They marched to meet that intoxicating melody of battle, and passed the band, and here was the very entrance to the Bloody Gorge.

"Come away, Prissitulchan!" She took his hand, broke into double time, and together they ran out ahead of the ranks just as the first rays of the westering sun struck into that desolate forbidding place where the river hissed, grumbled, scudded close below. High overhead a raven wheeled, bird of ill omen.

Digby glanced over his shoulder. They had left the clansmen far behind. They were half-way through.

But what was this? A blue plane came roaring up the Gorge, bucking and twisting in the turbulent airs, a few feet clearance between wing-tips and rock.

It all happened in a few twinklings of an eye. Out of the starboard window came a white object, a carton or the like, thrown down to strike the road. A second followed as the plane shot overhead. Three, four, five, six, seven, eight of the objects were

expelled. All found the road, which was impossible to miss. The last few landed right beside the Kilburnie column.

He looked dazedly again at one of the small, crushed cartons. It had burst open. A yellowish liquid was spreading on the road; from it came a most intolerable stink, a stench of rotten eggs. He remembered it well from laboratory experiments at Groton. It was the smell of sulphuretted hydrogen, nauseous, nose-gripping.

Digby held his breath and acted quickly. He was the one who took the initiative, pulling Fiona with him down the road, past the worst of it, and on thirty or forty yards until the odour was no more than an irritating trace in the air.

The plane circled above the Gorge, flew east again and out of sight. They looked upstream. Chaos reigned. The orderly column of Kilburnies had broken up. Bent figures scuttled in aimless little circles on the road, scrambled up the scree. Then all were blundering away against the sun. It was rout of Kilburnies by Balgersho, the whole thing planned with fiendish cunning, executed with diabolical skill and timing.

"Gudgey!" she ranted. "Gudgey stinker!" Then: "Gudgey cowards!" about her liege-men, the last of whom had staggered out of sight.

But this was not fair. No human being, however devoted and determined, could have braved that battery of stink bombs. "I didn't mean it," she said, repenting. "Come on then, Digby!"

Digby needed no urging. He had been battle-keen before; he was battle-lusting now. They raced along Balgersho road, swung left at the widening of the glen. Ahead were the battlements of Balgersho Castle, derelict, too, slightly less enormous than the Birks. It was a hotch-potch of a dozen architectural styles, Scottish Baronial being the last and worst, a hideous Christmas pudding of a house, but not Balgersho's current residence—that was a bungalow, an aluminium pre-fab, beyond the landing field.

The plane was coming in to land. It stopped just as Digby and Fiona reached the field. Hamish and Madeleine got

out. They were laughing, but neither looked in this direction.

"Leave him to me, Fiona," Digby said as they closed the distance. "This is my account. Now, promise!"

"Och," she muttered, "all right," in recognition of his champion status.

Madeleine turned first. "Gracious," she said after a silent moment. "Here's Rudolph in his kilt."

"You shut up!" Digby snarled; and a strong thought ran through him: It isn't me. I'm not Digby Ross, head of a great corporation. No, I'm the Urtyp, throwback to primeval man.

Balgersho straightened from the engine. A smile spread over his face in the way you had thought so lively and charming that first evening. "Hullo, Digby old boy," he said. "Hullo, Queenie. Fancy seeing you."

Now that the moment was here, Digby felt calm. The small shivering tremor and dryness of his mouth—these were the pumpings of adrenalin. He took off his jacket, which had belonged to the previous Kilburnie chieftain. "You'd better get ready," he said politely. "I intend to remove that smile from your face."

Balgersho laughed. "Have some sense," he said. "All in jest, Digby, my dear chap."

"I've taken a bellyful in the way of jest from you," said Digby. "Are you scared?" He handed the jacket to Fiona. He watched Balgersho's face. The smile stiffened a little, lost mobility.

"You never did have a sense of humour," Madeleine remarked. "You've always been a prissy little prig."

"Shut up!" This from Fiona. The women glared at one another.

"Keep quiet, both of you," said Hamish in his lordly way. "No hair-scratching. Look, Digby, old boy, I like you very much. You're the last chap I want to sock. What's all the fuss about?"

"You're a crook is what the fuss is all about. And you're scared." Balgersho's face darkened slightly, but he kept on smiling. "Well, if that's it," he said, and removed his jacket. Madeleine took it from him. What an extraordinary situation. "Come on, chum,

I don't want to fight you, but I can't take that. Withdraw." He was still not bellicose.

Digby did not answer. He assumed a pugilistic stance.

"I'd better warn you I boxed welter for the R.A.F."

"I'd better warn you I fought heavyweight for Harvard." This was totally untrue. Digby had taken lessons at one point, but never fought anyone in his adult life except one Copper Jamieson and Constable McIntoon. Both knock-outs. A lie, but he knew the value of morale in warfare.

They circled one another on the grass field beside the plane in the presence of two lovely seconds.

Balgersho had a loose and limber crouch, chin tucked behind his guard. He smiled, but it was not a pretty smile. He led a left to the mark. Digby blocked it, tried to duck the right cross, took that on the side of his head, painful, perhaps painful to Balgersho's knuckles, too.

Digby tried his own left. It didn't connect, but it told him something—that he had a big advantage in reach. That and thirty pounds in weight. He made his plan: I'll hold him off with my left. I'll lead and lead and lead for the body till I wear him out—then take the opening.

Sound in theory, not good in practice. His enemy was far too quick; he feinted, came in underneath, and the next thing was smack-smack to the jaw. Digby's world swam round and he was sitting on the grass. He shook his head to clear it. "Get up!" Fiona urged.

"Had enough?" asked Hamish, weaving around on the balls of his feet. "Scared?"

"You'll see!" He was okay again. First tactics wrong. Only one hope—slug it out; wear him down; make him stand and fight. Digby panted, but he was in fair good shape.

He went after Balgersho in furious onslaught, raining blows against his body, giving him no time, connecting once, and then again to the face, taking a nasty one to the stomach and another,



a low blow, and red lights shimmered up before Digby's eyes; but he was cold, too, he was calculating, he had seen something.

He gasped for breath and showered arm-heavy rights and lefts, driving Balgersho backwards by sheer weight. *Got to be now*, he thought. *Or I'm dead meat*.

What he had seen was a cluster of six-inch grassy tussocks, beyond Balgersho. He crowded in close. It was the only chance. *All's fair, and this is both love and war, so doubly fair*. Balgersho's left heel caught the first stiff clump of grass; he tripped, recovered but not soon enough. He was still off balance when his right heel came against a second tussock. His guard spread open. Digby was there. He used his right. It was a far better blow than the one he had dealt the envious McIntoon. Lord Balgersho finally stopped smiling; he subsided and lay asleep. Digby sucked his knuckles; they were torture.

Fiona ran up. "Oh, Digby!" she cried. "You did it for us. You avenged the Massacre. You wiped it off the slate. Four hundred

years to the very day. Och, Prissitulchan!" She put her hand on his right shoulder. It was the accolade.

"You fouled him!" Madeleine was kneeling beside Balgersho. The peer began to stir. She looked over her shoulder. "You did it on purpose. I saw you." Her voice was clear and cold and angry.

"He hit me low," said Digby hotly. "Didn't he, Fiona?"

Fiona made no reply. She was staring at Hamish Balgersho, who had opened his eyes and now sat up. She was staring at him with an extraordinary fixity.

"You're a bloody old scoundrel," said the wicked Baron. "But I must admit you pack a hefty punch." He fingered his jaw with rueful tenderness. Then he transferred attention to Fiona. He gave her back what she gave him, which was a stare of challenging intensity. It went on through potent seconds. "My elephant Queen," he said at last in that mocking superior way of his. "What's on your little mind?"

Fiona panted but otherwise was still, coiled like a tigress just before the spring. *She's going to kill him*, Digby thought. *She's going to administer the coup de grâce*. Which was only to be expected when you considered Fiona's elemental make-up.

But enough was enough. The poor guy was down, and still in sorry shape. "Steady, Fiona," Digby said, putting a restraining hand on her heaving shoulder. She brushed it off absently, much as she might have swatted at a fly.

"I was thinking," she said tightly, staring. Then she strode over to stand above him.

Madeleine moved away towards the plane. She must have sensed the charge; it filled the air, as of ten thousand volts building to leap a gap. *Violence!* it shouted.

"Well?" said Hamish, looking up at Fiona. He wore no amiable mask. He looked what he was—a ruthless patrician ne'er-do-well, a guy who did what he wanted if he wanted it enough. Odd, very odd to see it now just after he had been knocked out in fair, almost fair, fight by a better scrapper. "Have you seen sense?"

"We beat you," she said. "We had our vengeance. Och, Hamish!"

Now the astounding thing occurred. Fiona dived upon him. In a sense it was attack, but by no means the attack that Digby had expected. She wrestled with her rival chieftain on the good green grass; she covered him with kisses. Madeleine turned her back. Digby watched in baffled stupor.

Finally Balgersho freed himself. "That'll do," he said.

"Och, Hamie," she sighed. "To think I never guessed you were the one I loved. My Hielan' Laddie, and the feud's all over."

"Don't call me Hamie. Above all, stop using these barbarous expressions."

"And don't you call me Queenie," she gave back with heat.

But this masterful villain clipped her into his arms again, turned her over, and spanked her on the kilted bottom. "If I want to call you Queenie, I shall call you Queenie," he remarked. "Now I'm the boss. When I say: *Do this*, you bloody well do it."

"Not without marriage," she said stoutly with a quaver.

"Marriage it shall be, and the sooner the better. But no more philandering, Fiona. Enough's enough. Your salad days are over."

Her salad days with Digby Ross, the man who paid up and looked a fool and fought her battles and won a bridegroom for her and was cast away without even a murmur of regret or thanks.

Balgersho freed himself from Fiona and stood up. He glanced at Madeleine and Digby. He looked embarrassed. "I'm sorry for such an exhibition, Digby old boy," he mumbled. "But I've wanted this beautiful beast for so long—as I told you, didn't I—that my well-known self-control is temporarily out of kilter."

Fiona edged up to him again; there was no doubt that it had hit her like a cyclone. "I've never been in love before," she muttered.

"Just as if I was blind or something."

"Not now, Fiona," he said firmly and fondly. "Behave yourself."

"Yes, Hamish," she said, utterly his humble slave.

And yet, you know, Digby thought, I never even at the wildest

moments, I never liked to think of marriage with Fiona. It may be all right for this crook Hamish, but it would hardly do for me. Think of Fiona at the Staff Christmas party. Think of her wearing a kilt in New York City. Think of her arrogance with directors' wives. Just think of her tantrum language. No, it's a funny thing, but my heart's not broken. I'm just the faintest bit relieved. The pace was far too hot to last. And as for Madeleine, she's the one to blame for all of this. The appalling complexity of his problems, of his married wreckage, came flooding back.

"I must be going," he said. He wanted to get out of this mad situation at once. "I believe you have the Cadillac," he said to Madeleine coldly. She had taken it away that morning without so much as telling him, and he had had to get the gardener, Dougald, to drive him to the Birks.

"It's behind the house," she said, nodding at Balgersho's pre-fab. They walked side by side in prickling hostility, but no alternative. It stood out a mile that Hamish and Fiona had eyes, ears, et cetera, only for one another at this point of time.

"I say, old boy," called Hamish. "Do you mind if we hop a lift as far as the Birks? I have no gas left in my bloody kite."

They reached the car. Seating was not a problem. He kept his eyes away from the rear-view mirror. There were limits to a man's forbearance.

They turned into the Birks. "We'll be as poor as kirk mice, Hamie," mused Fiona. "I did so want to do up the Birks."

"Hamish," said Hamish. "Church mice. Don't forget. I agree it's a pity about the cash, though we still could rent, or sell it to the government as a miners' rest home."

"Sell which?"

"The Birks, my love. We're going to live in my aluminium mansion. Any objections?"

"I'll do what you say, Hamish darling, only I'll have to give some time just a little to the Clan."

"A modicum. Okay. But your wifely duty comes first."

The place looked much the same as usual except for paper lying around and tables standing on the grass. Digby drew up at the door.

"I'm going to change now, if I may, Fiona." He hurried upstairs, got out of his kilt in double time, and back into his tweed suit. Guilt and nostalgia tingled in his spine. He had just finished dressing when Fiona herself arrived.

Her lips were trembling, her eyes moist. He had seen a new docile Fiona this last hour, but happy—never a sign of tears.

"What's wrong, Fiona?"

She gulped. "Hamie, I mean Hamish, says I'm to burn the dolls."

"Hamish is right," he said. "Of course, I'm prejudiced. I never did like those little gargoyles." He glanced at them with some distaste.

"I like them terribly," she said. "They were my wee Highland men. Well, if he says so, I'll just have to do it." She went round to the table and took them one by one into the cradle of her left arm against her sad bosom, giving to each a fond last hug. "Colin," she sighed. "Donald, Sheepy, Fergus, Geordie, Douglas, Torquil, and Neil's the last one, well . . ."

She stared at him. She was not sad now, pensive rather. "I do like you very much Digby love's so funny Digby it's funny that the moment you avenged us I knew I loved him it was a new feeling. Can you understand love Digby?"

"No," he said. "Yes I can. To tell you the truth I guess I can understand anything from now on. It's a strange bloody world as the Colonel said yesterday. And here's another thing—suppose I'd let you shoot Hamish on McKercher. What about that?"

"I wouldn't have *killed* him; a flesh wound would have done. I'm a crack shot and I'll tell you something, Digby, you're much the nicest man I've ever known."

Who wants to be nice? "Come on," he said firmly. "No afterthoughts. Downstairs you go."

Hamish had laid a small fire of sticks and paper on the gravel. "Here goes," he said, and put a match to it, and strutted like a

victorious rooster. "Burn them up, Fiona." Madeleine watched from the car.

Fiona was no longer sad, no longer even pensive. "Colin," she giggled out of character, throwing him on the flames, and "Donald," and so on till every manikin had flamed and been consumed. It was a pity, really; they were works of art. "There!" she giggled again. "All gone."

"Is that the lot?" rapped Hamish. "Any more in the making?"

She gave him a startled look, then blushed. "I'll see," she said, went to the corner of the tower, and shouted: "Nanny! Where are you, Nanny?"

"Tut-tut now, dearie. What's got intae ye?"

"Got'ny dolls up yonder?"

"I've just the one that's no finished."

"Throw it down."

There were indignant mutterings from above; but in a moment the doll came tumbling down the ancient wall. Fiona caught it deftly, and returned. She was demure, not a likely thing for her to be.

Digby shot a glance at impassive Madeleine, at leering Hamish, at the embers of the bonfire. "It was to be my special favourite," Fiona sighed, turning the thing over in her hand. It was complete from toes to waist, wearing the green and gold and scarlet of Kilburnie—of Prissitulchan, too—the sporran made of leather, the shoes black, the knees brown, the hose a hunter's green. It lacked only bonnet, collar, tie and jacket.

"Come on," said her new lord and master. "Pop the little fellow in."

Fiona gave a last giggle. Then the flames sprang up.

It was high time to leave. "Good luck, my children!" Digby said. "There's just one thing, Hamish—a small matter of five pounds. I want it now, please."

For the second time that evening, Hamish was out of countenance. "My dear old boy," he almost stammered. "My dear old

boy, I'm clean out. I can get it by tomorrow. Would that do?"

"No," said Digby. "Now."

"Fiona, my love, got any cash?"

She shook her head. Money was far from her thoughts.

"Try Nanny, then." Fiona bounded obediently upstairs.

"Can I have a word with you, Digby?"

"Why, sure." He moved off with Hamish.

"Look, old boy, now that I've hooked this woman finally, I don't want to let the grass grow under my feet. And I do have a good many pals of this kind or that, mostly that, not very steady characters on the whole, apt to put squibs in the clergyman's cassock. Well, I've had an idea, but what with one thing and another I hardly like to ask you. . . ." Lord Balgersho seemed embarrassed.

"Ask away."

"The point is do you think you could stand the thought of being my best man? It's a sort of impertinent question to ask a chap of such sterling virtue, but I do wish you would."

"But I'm going next week." Best man? He did like the guy, though, didn't he unaccountably?

"We can have the wedding any time you say. Please, old boy."

"Well, okay," said Digby. "Thank you. It's a great compliment."

"Splendid!" Hamish slapped him on the back. "One other thing," he went on *sotto voce*, "and none of my business, but I couldn't help noticing a certain coolness between you and Madeleine. I just want to tell you that I think she's the most gutful attractive girl I've ever met. You should have seen her in the plane today, feeling as sick as hell, too. And if it wasn't for my inexplicable passion for old Queenie . . ."

Fiona brought the five pounds. She said quite loudly: "You'll always be my hero, Digby."

He got into the car and turned to look at this supremely handsome couple. "Congratulations," said Madeleine. She smiled very nicely at them. They started down the drive.

"Hamish asked me to be his best man," he said.

"He did, did he?" said Madeleine. "You'll always be that woman's hero, too. Always wonderful Digby. Always the biggest most conceited hypocrite in the world. Always the perfect little man."

"I'm sorry, Madeleine," he said. Yes, he was very sorry in some ways. "Hamish just told me you were the most gutful attractive girl he'd ever met." Madeleine wept. He had heard her cry often enough before, but never like this. She sobbed wildly and did not put a hand or a handkerchief up to her face.

He couldn't stand it. "Oh, Madeleine," he said. He put his hand on hers. Poor Madeleine. Yes, he had been a billy-goat, wooing another woman before her eyes.

"Stop it," she sobbed, pushing his hand away.

"What's wrong?" he asked. That hopeless helpless feeling.

"What's wrong?" She turned on the seat, eyes swollen, cheeks wet and blotched. It was damnably touching. "What's wrong is that I meet the one really attractive man in all my life, and you have to go and have a crazy fight and spoil everything and let her get her hooks in before I can do more than kiss him."

"Madeleine! Really, Madeleine!" He was profoundly shocked. It was downright immoral to talk that way.

She stopped crying, wiped her face, and shook with occasional after-spasms as they drove down and over McIntoon bridge and past the village and up to Glendrogan. "Really, Madeleine!" she mimicked. "There goes Prissy Ross again."

CHAPTER 16

HE DROPPED his wife at the front door, and went to park his Cadillac under the copper beech. "Digby P.!" It was the Colonel admiring gentians. He did not want the affliction of Galbraith, but the man could not be denied.

"Well, young feller, how did you get on? What in heaven's

name was that crocodile procession? What did you think of my Hitler salute? How come the contusions on your handsome face? How come the sanguinary fist?"

Digby gave a résumé, expurgated.

"So you knocked him out, eh? Wonderful, marvellous, you're a doughty old warrior, Digby P. Then I suppose Fiona took a knife to the rascal, or spat on him at the very least."

"No," said Digby. "She jumped on him. They're engaged to be married. The wedding's next week, in fact."

This information knocked the Colonel on his beam-ends. He mouthed words and could not say them. Finally he sat down on a rockery rock and put head in hands. "How awful," he groaned. "Oh sacred Krishna, how appalling! Are you sure?"

"Certain. Why so distressed, Colonel? They're what you might call natural mates."

"Unnatural. Think of the progeny. Think of the crookery and trickery and stupidity. Oh, this is a grievous blow, my boy. I did so hope we might get new blood in these parts. I had my pipe dreams. I thought that Madeleine and you might make a pair of matches here and settle down."

"Really, Colonel!" There went Prissy again.

"No offence intended, Digby P., in fact a compliment to you both, particularly to your charming wife, a girl in a million I would say. But I'm disappointed and I don't deny it. We're all frightful scoundrels, I'm afraid, except that sanctimonious old prig, MacLagan. He's a good man, I admit."

"Lachlan McLean's a splendid fellow," Digby interrupted. "The best type of younger clergyman, I would say."

"You would say, would you? Interesting, Digby P., very interesting to hear the views of such a distinguished wise guy as yourself." The Colonel's coat had changed all of a sudden. "If I may venture a wretched opinion of my own, it is that this milk-sop priest is a pain in the veritable neck. By the way, he has asked for an interview this evening at six of all hours. What's the time?"

"It's ten of six."

"I wonder what this Minister is after. It could be the usual charitable spiel. But I have a far worse suspicion that he's going to ask for Elspeth's lovely hand. In which case I'll give him a scare he won't forget. I'll warn him off the course for good and all."

"Why, Colonel?"

"First because she is needed in this house. Second, I don't like the earnest creature. He offends me."

"It wouldn't be you he'd want to marry," Digby said. "If you're too selfish to allow Elspeth to lead her own life, you deserve to be strung up."

The Colonel looked coldly at him. "That's an impertinence," he said, then wavered and weakened. "I've got to have a cook," he pleaded. "And Bridget Moloney shows restive signs already. I'm a lonely old chap, Digby P. I have to have someone to see to the house, and Elspeth's better than nothing. It's not much to ask when I brought her up."

"It's far too much to ask if she does want to marry. Cousin Mona was the only daughter of a widower. He wasn't that selfish."

"Quite different. Mona's poppa had no roots. He was a typical Yankee flitting from hotel to hotel. No. I'm sorry, Digby P., but nothing doing. Ah, here he comes. Well, live and let live is one of my many mottoes so I hope it's only about the Scouts." The Colonel seemed firm in his mean resolve.

The young Minister was stooped over handle-bars, pedalling fast uphill. He looked like a man spurred on by a purpose more consuming than Boy Scouts.

Digby had kept back the strong card. "Colonel," he said very carefully, "if Cousin Mona knew those were your views, I don't think she would ever forgive you."

That dirty punch struck home. It hit the Colonel right where belly bulged above sporran. "Oh, Lord," he groaned. "I never thought of that one, Digby P. I do believe you're right."

Lachlan McLean propped his bicycle and came over, hat in

hand. He was wild-eyed, trickles of sweat running down each cheek.

"Good evening, Colonel Galbraith. Good evening, Mr. Ross," bobbing a bow to each of them.

"Hello, Padre," said the Colonel. "How many souls have you saved today?"

The young man winced at this sample of Galbraithiana, stared down at his large black boots. He was in an emotional simmer, no question of it. He was all brewed up.

Digby had done his best in Lachlan's cause. If this was the fateful interview, it was not for him. "I think I'll go take a bath," he said. "Be seeing you, Lachlan."

"Oh, please stay, Mr. Ross."

"Well, Padre," said the Colonel. "Is it extortion again in a holy cause? Or have the Scouts been getting the Guides in trouble?"

Lachlan gave a jump, flushed, opened his mouth to speak, closed it. His eyes flickered all over the place.

Digby caught Lachlan's eye and frowned. *Do what I told you, he willed at him: Be tough!*

The Minister drew breath and exploded in a hollow charge of indignation: "I very much object to that remark, Colonel Galbraith. I suppose you say such things just to be clever and make fun of the finest youth movements in the world. And you're always making daft jokes like *How many souls have I saved today*. Well, if you want to know I haven't saved any, and I know one soul that isn't worth saving, and that's yours, Colonel Galbraith. You're a thorn in my flesh is the truth, and I'm fair fed-up. God forgive me." The Minister had gone into battle with a beginner's fury. He boomed as from the Presbyterian pulpit. It was impressive.

"Well, I mean to say, young feller, you can't speak to me like that you know, but perhaps I shouldn't have said it. Yes, it was a tactless joke. Quite the church militant, aren't you, what?"

Lachlan brushed this aside with a large hand. He stooped to stare into the Colonel's piggy eyes; they shifted. "I've not come

about the Scouts or the Guides or the Jumble Sale, Colonel Galbraith. I've come to ask for Miss Elspeth's hand in marriage if she'll have me."

The Colonel made one of his lightning rallies. "Indeed, sir? Pray tell me, have you reason to believe that my daughter is enamoured of you? Have you made advances to her?"

"No, Colonel Galbraith, and I don't know at all what she thinks about me; and it wouldn't be easy to find out considering the sarcastic remarks you're aye making whenever I'm near Miss Elspeth. You're a mocker of everything decent including love, Colonel Galbraith." Lachlan seemed to have taken Digby's advice too literally.

"Ah, love," sighed the Colonel, not offended. "Them's harsh words, m'boy, considering my preoccupation with the subject. Whatever my faults I never mock love. *Farquhar* my dear wife used to say *you've gotten amoor right on the brain*." He cleared his throat and said severely: "But man cannot live on love alone. How shall I express the matter delicately? What dough or dibs or onions . . .? In brief: could you support my daughter in the manner to which she is accustomed?"

"No, Colonel Galbraith. I've nothing but my stipend."

"And I fancy you'd expect a handsome little dowry from the despised father."

"I would not," said McLean vehemently. "I love Miss Elspeth for herself. I wouldn't let her bring a penny."

"But my dear boy," pleaded the chameleon Colonel, "that wouldn't be fair. Here she is, my one and only family possession. Surely you wouldn't begrudge a small allowance. Please now!"

"Not a penny, sir!" The Minister drew himself up to his spindly height. "May I pay my formal addresses to Miss Elspeth?"

There was a long pause while the Colonel stared across the glen. Clouds were building. When he turned there were tears in his eyes. "I was thinking of the time I proposed to Mona," he said. "Oh hell's bells," he wept. "Go to it, boy, and don't thank me, thank this interfering busybody, Ross."

"Thank you, Colonel Galbraith. Och, thanks." Lachlan pumped his hand, and strode towards the front door. Digby went, too. "I never knew he had such a good sad side to him. It just shows you shouldn't judge people. I wonder where Miss Elspeth is?"

"I'll see if I can find her. Do quit saying Miss Elspeth. Don't be so humble, Lachlan."

He went upstairs and knocked on Elspeth's door.

She was sitting at the open window, finishing the sweater. Good Lord, what a plain girl. "'Lo," she said, as clipped as ever. "Gathering a success?"

"I guess so," Digby said. "It was a parcel of surprises." And he deliberately broke the news of Hamish and Fiona.

Her fingers ceased to fly. She stared at Digby, gave him that full basilisk attention which he had once seen her bestow on Lachlan. "I knew it would happen," she said.

"And now Lachlan McLean is here to see you."

"What about?"

"He wants you to marry him."

Elspeth blushed. It was not a beautiful blush, like Fiona's, or Madeleine's the other night, but it brought life to her plainness.

"That fool!" she said.

"He asked and got your father's permission, and now he's pacing the smoking-room. You'll have to go down and tell him yes or no."

"He cut me dead in the village yesterday," she rambled thoughtfully. "So why does he come tonight? Lachlan is so good and serious and thinking about sin that I'll jolly well say No. I'm not keen on him, either, except that sometimes he makes me feel funny."

"He doesn't love you because you can cook or knit sweaters or be useful. He loves you honestly for yourself, Elspeth. It isn't only loving, it's being loved." And who am I, pray who am I to talk this way?

"It is nice to be liked," mused Elspeth, "and Lachlan's the only person who ever did like me for me and not for wanting some-

thing. Besides, it would be wonderful to get away from Father. He's so ungrateful!" She paused. "Suppose I'd better accept," she said quite softly and went over to her dressing-table with its wooden brushes and its bottle of Yardley's. She attacked her hair; put some lavender on; then tugged at her dress. "Look all right?"

"You look much the nicest I've ever seen you," Digby said. She did. She had a wanted glow, even a sparkle if you could believe it.

"Get it over with." Elspeth marched down to love.

Later, in his bath, Digby pulled at the plug chain with his big toe and lay till the water gurgled out. He was stiff and sore and jealous. Everyone had love but him. Disgusting the way Madeleine spoke about me spoiling her chances with that guy, just plain indecent. He would go make a date with old MacLagan, the only sane guy in this parish, and tomorrow—no, that was Sunday—Monday they would shoot or stalk or fish all day far, just as far as possible from woman.

CHAPTER 17

MONDAY NIGHT Digby went to bed early. Partly because he was tired after a great day in the field—with great good luck and MacLagan's guidance he had not only done the hat-trick, he had done the double hat-trick—and partly because the evening atmosphere at Glendrogan had more than ever been that compendium of malice and mockery and bad old corn which hung aura-like around the Colonel. Madeleine egged him on; Elspeth knitted a whole pair of socks with a new light in her eyes. Digby endured it till ten o'clock when he sourly said *Good night*.

An hour later, he lay awake. It was a cool dark night for sleep; but Digby could not sleep.

I wish I was home, he thought. I wish I was back on the job. I wonder how I could have forgotten the exhilaration of it these last weeks in Scotland, never even gave a thought to the real pleas-

ure of my life. I wonder how they're getting on with the Wyoming Project. . . . But however much he longed to be at grips once more with business problems which could be a sanctuary for him as for many men—the fact remained that his immediate world was here not there. Think of Madeleine calling me a poor old red-nosed sucker. Nursery humour, he thought bitterly. She used to bore me; now she maddens me. It's insufferable. We've got to have a showdown. Why shouldn't I go have it out with Madeleine?

What, now in the middle of the night? Don't be crazy. But she won't speak to me in the day-time; she never will. It's now or never. It's my duty to make one more effort, say to her: *Madeleine, this can't go on, if only for appearance's sake. We mustn't parade our differences before Galbraith.* Just a brief whispered talk and try to get her sympathy if she has any sanity left, and tiptoe back again, and nobody the wiser.

He groped for his moccasin slippers. He put on his dressing-gown. He prowled along the corridor. Downstairs he stood in the sepulchral hall, black but for a glimmer of polished table, of glassy stags' eyes on the walls. He was nervous.

He tiptoed up the side of the staircase, hardly any creaks. Reaching Madeleine's door, he turned the handle slowly, very slowly; it made no noise at all. He pushed. The door was locked. He released it carefully, and stalked back the way he had come. *She locked it,* he thought, grim and angry. *She barred this one last road to understanding.*

Digby was a determined man at any time, a man spurred now by insomnia. He went down again, unlocked the back door quietly, stepped into the cold night, and walked down the path by the North Wing. An owl hooted, the rapacious bird of night.

He stood below Madeleine's open window. It was the easiest climb imaginable, a mere twenty feet or thereabouts. The stones of the wall at that corner were laid one jutting out six inches and the next one in, the kind of wall an active spinster of sixty might succeed in scaling. To Digby the thing was child's play.



He did not pause to wonder whether it wasn't a dreadful thing to burst in on his estranged wife through the window. He swarmed up, gripped the sash, swung his left leg over and stepped for the first time with a slight thud into Madeleine's room. It was only as his night-accustomed eyes saw her sit bolt upright in bed and emit an ear-shattering scream that he realized what he had done.

"It's only me, Madeleine," he whispered hoarsely. "I had to have a talk."

"Go away, you horrible man! Go away!" Then she began to sob, the racking sobs of shock.

Doors opening, the sounds of feet, a light on the landing, the Colonel's excited shouts: "Where is it? What's wrong? Who yelled?"

Imperturbable Elspeth: "It was Madeleine."

She sobbed on. "Sssh!" Digby hissed. He could knife himself and her; he could fall dead. "Say you had a nightmare."

The Colonel hammering on the door. "My dear child, what's wrong? What happened, Madeleine?"

"Nightmare," she wailed at the top of the register. Now she started to laugh, wild sobs of laughter.

"There, there," cried the Colonel. "You poor girl!" He rattled the door in distress. "Elspeth, go and fetch her husband, fetch that idiot Digby P.! Quick, girl, quick!"

"I'm here, Colonel," said Digby loudly. "I heard her and I came along."

"Come back, Elspeth. He's here already." After that a pregnant silence beyond the door while Madeleine's sobs and laughter grew less desperate, subsided and almost stopped.

"You'll call if you need me?" growled the Colonel. "Promise?"

"Yes." Madeleine gave a long tremorous snuffle and was still.

Mutterings from outside. "... A brutal streak. I suspected it. But never interfere between man and wife, never never if you value your skin. Take my tip, Elspeth. . . ."

"Bed, Father." Elspeth was quite unmoved. They shuffled off.

The old house was quiet again. Digby looked down at Madeleine with penitence and self-reproach.

She turned to look at him over her left shoulder. In the dimness he could see the soft familiar feminine curve of her jawbone, and the unfamiliar tears on her face. *She is beautiful*, he thought. *She's sad and beautiful.*

"Are you mad?" she whispered, not sadly but with anger. "Are you crazy or drunk again or what?"

"Crazy." He nodded his head miserably. "And I couldn't sleep." Nod. "Everything's hell." He was sorry for himself. "I had to talk to you."

"So you climb in my window after midnight and give me the worst fright . . ."

"I'm sorry, Madeleine. I tried the door, but it was locked."

"Oh, go away. You're a pain in the neck."

"I just want to talk to you about us."

"What about us? What's there to talk about?"

But he could think of none of the things he had intended to say.

"I haven't had a wink of sleep. Do go away."

"Good night then." Digby turned away. He was low, not angry. Why hadn't she slept?

"Good night and see-you-in-the-morning, see you a picture of dignity at breakfast, picture of the husband who ran to his wife's scream. You don't think he believed that, do you?"

"I don't care what he believes," in a throaty whisper half-way to the door.

"Ssh! They'll hear. Digby, why *did* you come?"

"Because I couldn't stand it."

"Couldn't stand what?"

"Not being able to sleep, and you jeering at me, and parading our differences under the same roof for Galbraith to see."

She sighed and lay down again. "I know. So it was just because of appearances?"

"No." The real reason why he had come struck through his careful edifice of self-deception. He went to the bed and stood over her. It was cold. He shivered. Should he say it or not say it?

"I came because I was lonely and jealous if you want to know," he muttered disagreeably.

She smiled. "Poor frozen Digby. Come in beside me and get warm. We can talk better."

He put his head into her shoulder. The skin was cold, then it was warm. Everything was warm and comforting.

"It's nearly three. I'll have to go."

But it was later than three when Digby went back to his North Wing by the inner route.

AT BREAKFAST next morning Madeleine's convincing account of her nightmare drew fresh murmurings of sympathy. If the Colonel had had suspicions, he forgot about them. Afterwards, Digby walked a bit with Galbraith in the garden; then, leaving his host with his lilies, he went back into the house. "I did want to have a grand big wedding," Fiona was saying as he paused in the porch.

"I mean after all, Madeleine, it's the most important day in a girl's life when she finally gives herself to a man, but Hamish just says: *Getting spliced up is all that matters*. Anyway, I'm jolly well wearing the satin wedding-dress Nanny's making. Nanny's terribly pleased. She says she knew all along that Hamie was the one I loved. But I do think he's mean the way he bosses me, just as if I was a concubine or something. Don't you think so, Madeleine?"

"I know," said Madeleine in a soothing cosy tone. "But they're all the same, Fiona. Now take my Digby . . ."

"Oh, *Digby's* different. Digby's always so kind and considerate just like an uncle or something, or perhaps he's too good-looking to be an uncle really."

Good Lord, Digby thought. What's she going to come out with next? He stepped heavily through the hall and into the smoking-room. The two of them were in arm-chairs.

"Good morning, Fiona," he said heartily. "How's everything?"

She pouted, lolling in Highland dress. "Not very good," she said. "I was just thinking I wished Hamie was more like you and less like him Digby, but you can't have everything can you?"

"No, Fiona," he said. He caught Madeleine's eye. Her gaze had a steely quality, as of a female hawk watching for shenanigans in the nesting season. "You wish Hamish was more like dear old Uncle Digby," he said. "And I guess, for all I know, he wishes you were more like Auntie Madeleine. True love sets such a high standard for the adored one." Madeleine laughed.

But Fiona was cross. "He doesn't! He wants me to be me. *Just be yourself my poppet*, he keeps saying. He says there isn't another woman in the world like me."

"And he's quite right, too, nobody ever said a truer word. There, there, Fiona."

She sniffed. "You make the silliest American kind of jokes sometimes, Digby." But she calmed down and continued: "Well it's to be in the kirk of course but we're not sending out invitations because Hamish says he's waited so long to get a hold on me that

he isn't going to tempt Providence now even if it does mean fewer wedding presents. But we're having a reception at the Birks, just everybody local and some relations, and a man called Pranger Potter who was in Hamish's squadron. This man Pranger is flying some wonderfully cheap champagne over from Belgium or one of those places but it's supposed to be a secret because he's using an Air Force plane and that isn't exactly allowed. Well then afterwards I'm going to be standing in the ballroom under the great chandelier and everyone will file past to kiss the bride. Have you seen our chandelier, Madeleine?"

Madeleine shook her head and smiled.

"It's much the biggest and most famous chandelier in Scotland. I showed it to Digby one time. Then next will be the speeches. We'll have to allow Uncle Farquhar to make a speech because he's giving me away and I do hope Digby's going to make a rhyming speech like for the Gathering."

"No," said Digby. "Not on your life. Sorry, Fiona."

"Oh but you must, darling," from Madeleine. "They expect it."

"Nothing doing."

"That's gudgey," hissed Fiona.

"I do think you're mean," mocked Madeleine.

"We're going to have Highland dancing after the speeches, and then of course we're having a buffet as well as a cake but it's all so terribly expensive and we haven't got a bean between us and we were saying to one another just last night that you might like to take the Birks for the grouse and stalking next year and if you could let us have the rent in advance it would be a marvellous help Digby."

"That's a very very kind offer, Fiona, and I do appreciate it. But we have other plans for next year. Also I think, perhaps, people here may possibly have formed an exaggerated estimate of my financial resources, which I may say are by no means inexhaustible, and there have been unexpectedly heavy drains . . ."

"Now now, darling, this isn't the annual report. I think I could let you have a little, Fiona, if it would help."

"It would be a marvellous help, Madeleine. You're awfully sweet." She glared resentfully at Digby, and muttered: "You've a bruty side, too."

"Bruty! Fiona, you say such wonderful things." Madeleine laughed and laughed. They had teamed up on him, this ravishing pair of hellions.

"I'll give you one toast-rack with my blessings," he remarked, and stalked to the window. Balgersho's monoplane was gliding in for a landing.

"I can hear him!" cried Fiona. "Oh, here he comes. Am I all right, Madeleine?"

"You look wonderful."

Fiona composed her limbs and sat primly. What this man had done to her was nothing short of awe-inspiring.

Here he came now, the wicked Baron, in faded kilt and khaki shirt and old tweed jacket. "Hullo, my poppet," he said, but he did not go to her. He loped across and stood with hands on hips looking down at Madeleine.

"Hullo, Hamish," she said after a few seconds, amused and then uneasy. "Why the scrutiny?"

"I see you've made it up. Well done, Digby old boy. I'm delighted."

The blush was one of Madeleine's very best. She giggled.

CHAPTER 18

BRIDE and bridegroom stood in the ballroom at the Birks, while guests streamed in through the East Tower door. The bride in her satin dress, wearing two sashes not just one—the green gold scarlet of Kilburnie, the grey blue saffron of dress Tarr draped from each shoulder to meet at the Brooch. Her eyes downcast beneath the veil, demure, leaning on tubby Uncle's arm.

Hamish in full regalia of doublet, kilt and lace, of hose and

sporrán, of belt and dirk, of buckled shoe, of skean-dhu.

Elsbeth, sole bridesmaid, wearing a powder-blue confection, slimming her bulges, lengthening her stocky lines, all thanks to Madeleine's unerring eye, thanks to Nanny's gifted needle.

Digby and Pranger Potter opened champagne. Pop! went the corks. Pop, pop and again pop. The unknown vintage sounded good. It looked good, too, in tumbler, sherry glass or goblet, for these were a polyglot collection, last survivors of a cut-glass army.

"I say, Dig——" said Pranger. He was a gargantuan man with a black moustache which made a wisp of the Colonel's appendage. He was in uniform, his broad chest stacked with ribbons—D.S.O.s and D.F.C.s and the Silver Star and the Croix de Guerre and every campaign you could imagine. Pranger was the true fighter-boy potato. "I say, old Dig, talk about atomic crackerjack! Lord take me for an inverted loop. Lord stall me in the drink. I never in my born days saw a twin-boom fuselage like that." He gazed with simple awe at Lady Balgersho, née Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks, Chieftain et cetera.

Pranger's mirth boomed along the ballroom, resounded from walls and echoed from the ceiling. The Colonel had given him many a pint of ale and then the pair of them had switched to champagne out of tankards, which spells danger to the oldest hand. Pranger was in fine form. All the chatter ceased now, and heads turned. For a short moment Pranger stole the show, his only rival the distant bellowing from the Park, for the rutting season had just begun, and the two Royal Stags now clashed all day, not in mock battles but in furious frustrated combat.

"Digby!" It was Fiona. A frown had sped across her face.

"Yes, Fiona?" he called back.

"Take your place in line!"

He had been too busy up to now to join the congratulatory queue. But this was a summons, a command he must obey.

He found Madeleine near the door. She wore a dress of navy blue with white collar and white cuffs, artfully simple, exactly

right for a dark beauty on a fair beauty's day. She flaunted a scarlet hat. They joined the line.

Now Madeleine's turn to exchange cheeks with Fiona under the chandelier. Then Digby himself and no question she was thinking of that first time: "Look up at the cairngorm, Digby." They craned their necks back, and she murmured "Goodbye, Digby, I wonder if a girl can love a second man just a teeny bit underneath."

"Quite impossible," he mumbled as their lips met in a kiss from which he soon disengaged himself. Fiona meant no harm. She was saying goodbye to all that, as the best of girls do on their wedding days.

Hamish finished with Madeleine, too. "You look good enough to eat," he said, in order to make her blush, and loud enough to annoy Fiona, who closed upon him jealously at once.

"Find yourselves glasses one and all!" It was the Colonel. He had clambered up on a table; he wore an unusually benign expression; he swayed a little from the hips, more perhaps from the generous rhythm of his mood than from unstable equilibrium; he held a full pint tumbler of champagne. "Fill up now!" he called. "I have an intolerable thirst which cannot be long denied."

Soon the whole company had glasses. "Your Grace," he began. "M' Lords and M' Ladies, Chief of this and Chief of that, Hereditary whatnots, Master of the Eagles, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Ladies and Gents, Bride and Groom and good old Prissitulchar-

"It is indeed a pride and privilege on this most unparalleled occasion to propose the health of the sweet bride whom I have just had the ineffable pleasure of handing over. We all of us know Fiona. We know of her beauty; we know of her wisdom; we remember her adorable girlhood pranks. . . ."

It appeared that the old buzzard could keep this up indefinitely. Digby glanced over the crowd at Fiona. She glowed with pleasure, looked at her husband, looked at herself. She was lapping it up.

After the Colonel there were speeches by Hamish and Digby which lasted about a minute each; there was the cutting of Bridget

Moloney's three-tiered cake; there were wedding photographs.

Then pipes tuned up and stiff Scottish people cast off reserve, and yells rang out, and feet were merry, such tinkles and twinkles of chandelier, with the Bride and the Bridegroom setting the style.

"Last dance!" screamed the Colonel, some time later. "Positively the last race on the card! Saddle your horses for the Maiden Stakes. Partners for the Highland schottische. All colts and fillies in the ring. MacLagan, you shall be my filly."

He jumped down and seized MacLagan for his partner.

"Nanny, would you do me the honour of dancing?"

"Och, Mr. Ross!" Such beams of delight, the dear old thing.

DIGBY entered the room of grouse and strawberries. It was almost over.

Hamish was wearing a suit for going away, which made him look different but no less raffish. He would be as much the pirate in Bond Street or on Fifth Avenue as here among his native hills. "Old Pranger's pretty well had it." He nodded at his henchman who lay comatose on the sofa, moustache stirring with each breath.

"I wouldn't wonder," said Digby, "after flying all night and what he's been through since."

But Pranger sat up with a jerk. "I'm tickety-boo, Wings," he protested. "Chute on, fully alerted, ready to scramble. Oh, hullo Dig, you old wizard."

"Is Queenie ready?" Hamish asked.

"I'll see." Digby went half-way upstairs. "Madeleine!" She looked over. "Is she ready?"

Madeleine shook her head. "Not quite," she whispered. "The poor child's been crying. She says she can't bear the thought of facing the unknown, but Nanny comforted her."

Digby leaned against the wall. He had laughed a good deal today. Now he giggled weakly.

Hamish was restless. He went over and looked at the throng milling on the ground below. Rasp of feet and buzz of talk blended.

The two stags roared again in quick succession. "Good Lord!" he said. "They're making passes at the kite."

The beasts had ceased battling one another. They now stood close to the blue monoplane, heads low, ruffs distended, antlers weaving. They roared. The passes were hostile, not affectionate. They sensed a rival in this wide-antlered machine.

"Scramble, Pranger! Get rid of them! Start the engine!"

Pranger scrambled without a word.

Hamish was pensive. "Well, I suppose we'll see you and Madeleine again some day. You'll come back here; or Queenie and I might take a trip to America before we get too long in the tooth to enjoy it. Years hence you may get a warning cable."

"That would be swell," said Digby, not quite sure how swell it would be. "You still haven't told me where you're spending the honeymoon, or is that a secret?"

"Thank's to Digby P. Ross's wedding cash, we've taken a suite at the Cally in Edinburgh. That's for a night or two. And I've booked another at Claridges. The city lights for us. Fiona says she wants to be able to get up and go dancing whenever she feels like it. To be more accurate, whenever *I* feel like it. Don't you think I handle the woman well, Digby old boy?"

"Superbly," said Digby. "Don't be too severe though. She's a mettlesome girl, and I'd hate to think of her subdued."

"Don't you worry," Hamish said. "She'll have the pants off me in no time. Well, after the honeymoon we shall set up house in my pre-fab, and the babies will start rolling in. Isn't she wonderful? Boys she wants, whole platoons of men-children."

"Seven isn't it?" said Digby thoughtlessly, and received a cold speculative glance from his Lordship of Balgersho. Outside, the engine had roared up to full revs and subsided to a putter again.

Fiona danced in through the door with a skip and a hop and a twinkle of high-heeled shoes. She wore a plain grey coat and skirt, a white piqué blouse, a small grey beret cocked on her burnished head. No brooch, no tartan, no Highland traces. She was the bride

universal. She sank in an exquisite curtsey to her husband. He took both her hands. "You're a hopeless marvellous woman," he said.

Madeleine stood behind, vicariously bright-eyed, too. Poor dear Nanny wept in the doorway.

Ah, women! Digby thought. He picked up the suitcases and hurried down, past all the confetti-clasping guests that lined the path. He handed the luggage to Pranger.

Cheers rang out behind them, confetti fell in multi-coloured showers, and Colonel Galbraith tied an ancient boot to the tail strut. The Royal Stags still lurked menacingly beyond the plane.

"I told you to get rid of them, Pranger," Hamish said.

"I know, Wings old boy. But I can't shift them. A shotgun squirt's the only hope."

"I'll soon sort them," cried Fiona. She strode forward, pale at the nostrils, stopped a yard or two from the menacing stags, then raised her arms wide in that splendidly flamboyant gesture she had made at the Gathering. "Gudgey brutes!"

The great beasts turned and slunk away.

Door shut; a blast of wind and hats and hair flying; a take-off straight down the park, back now overhead with the Colonel's boot streaming out behind, and a dip this way and a dip that, off south to Edinburgh en route for London and dancing when they feel like it. God-speed to Lord and Lady Balgersho.

It was nearly six. "Madeleine, we must leave right away if we're going to reach Achnasheen tonight."

"I know. Oh dear, I hate to go."

So sad goodbyes on every hand and into the Cadillac, and the tearful Colonel kissed Madeleine yet again.

"Sing up!" he cried. "Sing with me." And he led the throng in a version of Bonny Prince Charlie's song:

"Bonny Rosses noo' awa'
Sailing o'er the western main
Mony a hearrt will brak in twa
Should ye no come back again."

"Drive off, Digby P.! Get going!"

The song followed them a long way down the drive.

They sailed from Greenock five days later.

CHAPTER 19

DIGBY watched through the open porthole. A part of him was still out there with the yachts in a sailing breeze up the Gareloch.

"Well, here we are," he said, meaning *Goodbye, Scotland*.

A steward knocked on the door. "Purser's compliments, Mr. Ross." He held out orange envelope on silvery salver.

"Thanks." He opened the wire and read: GOD SAVE THE ROSSES AND AMERICA GALBRAITH. What a typical crazy-sounding wire.

"Farquie always says whatever comes into his head. It's sweet of him to think of us. You do like Farquie, don't you, Digby?"

"I like him much better in retrospect," Digby said.

"You want everybody to be perfect," said Madeleine.

"No, I don't," he said at the porthole again. Why was she like this today? Suddenly he was aware that she was crying.

"What is it, darling? Haven't we had the best time ever together lately?"

"I know, and it's nearly over, and I've been wanting to talk to you ever since we came on the ship, but how can I when all you do is sigh and groan and prow around."

Digby removed his sad wife from the chair, sat down himself and placed her on his lap. "Now come clean, what's it all about?"

"All I want to tell you is I'm having a baby."

A baby? A son? Digby P. Ross Third?

"Aren't you going to say anything? Aren't you pleased?"

"Pleased! But how can you possibly tell . . .?"

"Because I just had a sort of hunchy feeling, and I'd heard of

a marvellous new test; so instead of shopping as I told you this morning, I was seeing this man in Glasgow who discovered it."

"Something to do with rabbits?"

"No, darling. It used to be rabbits. This is something with frogs, and they know in a minute."

Digby was too stunned and happy at these tidings to comment. "You will rest, won't you, Madeleine," he said in a while. "It's been a tiring day. And promise not to do my unpacking?"

"All right, darling. Now off you go and play on deck."

But Digby did not go immediately on deck. *Pre-natal care*, he said to himself as he hurried along rubbery corridors with all the pipes overhead. He headed for the Ship's Surgeon's cabin.

"Twelve *days*?" that gentleman exploded.

What does he think I meant, months? Oh well, it could be weeks.

The Ship's Surgeon pursed lips, clenched teeth, struggled with himself, and finally burst into loud laughter. He was a fool. He was a rude ill-mannered fool of a ship's surgeon or doctor. Digby explained about the new frog-test.

"Good heavens," said the doctor. "I must have missed that one! I wonder what they'll think up next. But I suppose the frogs speak truth; these new-fangled Mumbo Jumbos generally do. Well, Mr. Ross, your wife should go on exactly as usual in moderation and live a healthy restful life with no over-excitement. . . . I expect you're very pleased, are you?"

Digby looked down. "Yes," he said. "Yes, I am."

"Did she know you were coming to see me?"

"No."

"You might be wiser not to tell her. Sometimes women don't appreciate their husbands dashing off to doctors."

Madeleine was sitting on her bed. Cabin trunks and suitcases lay around half unpacked. She did not look up. She was holding two dog-eared sheets of foolscap paper, one in each hand.

Oh no! Digby thought. *She's found it.* The one thing he intended



she should never see—his poem at the Gathering of Clan Kilburnie. He had stowed it between two shirts. "You promised you would leave my cases," he said sharply, forgetting good resolutions.

Now she's going to look up and laugh about my little rhyme in kilts.

She didn't. She dropped the two sheets of paper on her lap. "Oh, what a little fool I am!" she murmured. "To think I've been married to you all these years, and I never guessed. Oh, Digby!"

"You *like* it?"

"It isn't liking or not liking. It's knowing that you're a poet. Oh darling, to think of how I've let you waste your life and how I've wasted mine over so-called poets without a hundredth part of

your gift. . . ." She stopped. She continued to stare at him in joyful half-believing all-believing discovery. Her husband had become her altogether man.

I knew it, of course, Digby thought. I knew I had something. But I'd better break it to her quickly that I've given up poetry for good and all after one effort. No arty life for me, no sir.

"Take it easy, darling," he said. "Lots of people have a second talent they don't develop, can't afford to develop. Besides . . ."

"I'll give up everything," she cried fiercely. "Why couldn't we live all year round at the fishing-camp if that gave you inspiration?"

"But I don't want to write verses. I just want to go on being what I am—which is a business man and a pretty good one too at that, although I say it myself."

"Of course you're good at business, darling. You're good at whatever you do." Madeleine smiled. "But this is the only thing you have a genius for, just this." She tapped his hallowed sheets of paper. "You *will* let me send it to Franklin Days at the *Beacon*, won't you?"

"We'll see, darling. We can discuss all that later. Now don't you think you should have a little sleep? It's most important that there should be no over-excitement or undue fatigue at this stage."

Madeleine stared at him again, but not with adulation. It was a narrowing, hostile, clairvoyant gaze. "Do you mean to tell me you've been asking someone?" she demanded. "Yes, I can see it in your face. You've been to the ship's doctor."

Digby hung his head. Oh, to be a liar. "Checking up on prenatal care," he mumbled. "Natural thing to do."

"How dare you! I can just hear you asking him pompous questions, and then running to the stewardess with a fat tip: *Mrs. Ross is in a delicate condition.*"

"I didn't tell another soul." The cabin stewardess had been the very next item on his parental schedule.

"You make a fool of me. You make a fool of me in everything. You make a fool of me with that wench Fiona; you make a fool of

me by suddenly being a poet; you even make a fool of me by getting your inspiration from another woman, don't think I haven't been thinking of that, either; now you make a fool of me by running off to tell all and sundry about the baby which I wanted to be an absolute secret for months and months."

Turn the other cheek. Turn it always. "Cross my heart," Digby said. "Never another whisper till you say so. I'm sorry for being such a dope, but I'm all upset at the good news." He glanced at her. Risk a joke? "I'm a wonderful guy. You just said so before you changed your mind."

"You're hopeless. Come here." It was peace again as the ship sailed down the Firth of Clyde.

DIGBY stood at the rail looking aft. The gulls wheeled and sailed, and dived to make discordant scavenge-centres in the wash.

Scotland fell astern. It's been the best time of my life he thought, even if they used me and abused me, even if my contributions to the slaking of Galbraith's thirst, and to the Gathering, and to the consummation of Hamish and Fiona, the last-named being an enormous item—even if all this ran into a mighty big pile of dollars, and was anybody grateful? I wonder. I don't see it matters much.

Some of them were the strangest human animals I ever encountered. What, for example, does the Colonel contribute to mankind? What do Hamish and Fiona create? Just plain nothing till the boys start rolling in, and that'll be a dubious creation, yes sir. The one thing they do have is a—how can I say it?—a sort of mastery of life and living and environment. They are masters of doing little; we in America are victims of doing much.

Goodbye then, to the kind Scottish people, and thank you for a most worthwhile interlude, and thank you for making a real couple out of Madeleine and me. Yes, we're a real American husband and wife. But you're not real: you're the players in my extravaganza of the Highlands. I shall remember you, and not

be quite sure you happened. And will I be glad to get back among sensible Americans. Oh boy, will I! But thanks a million.

Perhaps in twenty years, my boy Digby P. Ross Third will be at the age for a broadening experience. I shall say to him: *Off you go, young fella, to spend a month with the Balgershos. I was his best man once. Watch these people. Study them. Take them with several grains of salt. Don't let them fool you. Above all, avoid lending or giving money to the Tarrs of Balgersho. Now, if you must dance a Highland Fling with some Scotch girl, dance it discreetly; there you are, my boy; go learn what life is all about.* Oh, I shall be a wise and excellent parent.

Digby moved to the port side of this high deck. He looked across the miles of white-capped water to the coast of Ayrshire.

But what was this? The liner was not alone. A little off the port bow and steering a similar course, and bucking and rolling in lively fashion, was a pleasure steamer. It was not excursion weather, but the top deck was crowded. Hardy folk these Scots. They must be coming out to see the big ship off. The little steamer was dressed over-all in a gay fluttering of flags. Between masts stretched a banner, upon it in giant letters: SCOTLAND FOR EVER.

A sound came on the strong east wind—the wailing of many bagpipes to the accompanying staccato beat of drums. That crowd was not a crowd, but a pipe band in full dress on parade, miraculously steady on the heaving deck.

The little steamer—one long blast. That would be *Goodbye and God-speed across the ocean* to her great sister. And above Digby's head the foghorn answered—a sonorous all-engulfing acknowledgment.

But suddenly there was a lessening of vibration underfoot. This was not a parting, but a meeting. Surely not the pilot boat? No, impossible. He hurried down one deck and found himself a place just above the companion-ladder while big ship and small ship converged, and the pipe band burst into "Highland Laddie." A

sailor waited on the platform. He was a fine-looking young sailor with an eager Scottish face. The ships met. He extended a hand.

Lady Balgersho, née Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks, jumped lithely and blithely in her kilt. She took the steep steps two at a time as if she had been doing this sort of thing all her life, not only as a wartime Wren at Oban. Hamish now crossed, too.

Good heavens! thought Digby. They've come to see us off. I must say that's a pretty swell thing for them to do. He raced down.

"Och, Digby!" cried Fiona, and threw herself on his neck. "My goodness it's grand to see you so soon again. We're going to have a most wonderful time on the ship."

He was too dumbfounded even to disengage himself. "You're sailing on this ship?"

"Yes, old boy," said Hamish. He roared with laughter, twice as devilish and far more ebullient than usual. "Let the woman go now, in case it becomes a habit."

Digby broke from Fiona with the repulsive alacrity of one North Pole from another.

"You see, we had the idea originally just after we got engaged, but I thought it better not to raise your hopes too soon. I got in touch with a pal of mine, one of the top boys in the British Council. So he checked at the Embassy and telephoned back—if *Digby P. Ross is your main contact and close friend, I think there might possibly be a case for sending you over, because the American industrialists are apt to be somewhat of a hard core of resistance over matters British at the present time and Mr. Ross's support would doubtless be invaluable. But I can't promise, and there will be delay.* His very words; they do get pompous, don't they?"

"Well then, we only spent one night in Edinburgh because I was very keen to get this fixed, and we didn't feel that an ordinary honeymoon would quite give us scope for our energies. So on to London. You should have seen Queenie get to work on that chap; she had him gasping from the word go.

"The long and the short of it is that we're going to the U.S.A.

to give a new line on British culture and aims and the excellence of our exports and all that boloney. And thanks to your most generous wedding present, I had enough to pay for the tickets."

"You see Digby, Hamie is going to make some speeches and the Scottish Office is sponsoring us, too, and all that send-off just now was from the Scotland For Ever League and we're going to hold Gatherings everywhere joint ones for Kilburnies and Tarrs because they must get used to being friends. . . ."

At which Hamish groaned, and Fiona's eyes flashed at him, but she went on.

"You see Digby this is my great chance before I'm tied down having babies and I'm going to sing songs and we'll dance Highland dances to packed audiences all the way across America but of course we'll be in New York first because I know you'll be simply longing to have us to stay and pay back some of all we did for you and could you let me have that poem you said at the Gathering because I think it would be an awfully good thing for me to recite in our programme you will won't you Digby?"

"No," he said. "I will not."

Hamish put his arm round Fiona. "My lovely idiot, I keep telling you not to rush your fences. Give the poor chap time. Well, I must say, Digby old boy, you might give us a warmer welcome."

"It's quite a surprise," said Digby. The news staggered him.

"How's Madeleine?"

"Oh, fine. She's resting now." There were a lot of people hanging around—the purser, stewards with tattered Balgersho baggage, passengers—everyone listening avidly, every male eye drinking in Fiona. But to Digby Ross her charms had ceased to speak.

"You see Digby," she went on loudly before an admiring crowd which now blocked the stairs both up and down. "We just had time to fly home and get our kilts and everything and my wedding dress with the sashes crossed at the bust because that's the one I'm going to wear when I sing and when I recite the poem and Uncle Farquie was awfully pleased when we told him he laughed like

anything and he said it was the best thing he'd heard of for years and he would send you a wire to the ship. Did he, Digby?"

"Yes, he did." *God save the Rosses and America.*

"Now we'd better find our cabin," Hamish said. "You'll fix up about a table for the four of us, won't you, Digby?"

"Well actually, Madeleine and I are sitting at the Captain's table."

Hamish threw up his spade-ended chin. "Ha, ha, ha!" in volley of mirth. "Where else? I might have known it."

But the Chief Steward now stepped forward. "Lord Balgersho, the Captain sends his compliments, m'Lord, and would you and Lady Balgersho care to join him at his table?"

"What do you say, Queenie?"

"Fiona," she corrected. "Of course, darling. We want to be wherever Digby and Madeleine are."

"See you later then, Digby old boy."

"This way," said the Purser; he in person led them off to their cabin.

The crowd moved again, and he was alone. Shall I go right away and break it to her? No, better not, better master myself.

Digby mounted yet again to the promenade deck where wind clapped and whistled beyond windows, and ventilators hummed, and the ship was beginning to creak.

He strode aft, a tall distinguished figure, capturing the notice of men and women, but unnoticing, past the barrier to the tourist accommodation—gate open, as always on sailing day. He stepped over a rope and climbed steps to the after-bridge. Here at last, he found solitude.

And to think . . . just to think that out of the goodness of my heart I agreed to be his best man, and worked my head off, and he makes use even of that—*My best pal, old boy. My best man, y'know. Longing to pay back some of our hospitality. Yes, of course he'll help over contacts.* I can hear him.

And just to think that I'm the one who paid for their cabin on

A Deck, not the British Council, nor the Scottish Office, nor these vultures themselves, but me, Digby Ross, poor rich sap.

And Madeleine, I know only too well that she'll insist on having them to stay at the apartment. She'll say: *We can't Digby. We simply must not fail in hospitality.*

And just to think of the two of them arriving at head office, and word will fly around, and every male clerk will quit work to ogle Fiona in her kilt, and every female clerk will quit work to ogle Hamish in his kilt. The whole place disrupted, dancing Highland dances on every floor. Finally Miss Prendergast, all coy blushes, will show them in. *Hullo, old boy, we just popped up.—Och, Digby I knew you'd have the brawest office.*

And just to think—the most annoying thought of all—that when they do finally, if ever, tour America, they unquestionably will make a million dollars.

The pleasure steamer was well away, heading for home and Bonny Scotland. A few lights flickered ashore. The gulls still came with the ship, rapacious scavengers of the sea, crying of treachery.

“Beg pardon, sirr!” It was the same sailor who had held a hand out for Fiona—a square-faced, carrotty-headed, obstinate-looking, typical Scottish sailor with a cuttable accent. “Mr. McVitie, the Chief Awfficer’s cawmpliments, an’ I’m to say passengers no’ allowed on the after-bridge.”

Digby’s self-control snapped. He rounded on this representative of the country of his father’s people. “Will you for heaven’s sake not pester me?” he bellowed at the startled laddie. He had no missile to throw. Except for that he was right back where he had started from with Miss Prendergast.

Or was he? No, indeed. As Digby descended to the deck, he began to laugh. He laughed at himself. He laughed at this turbulent breed of Scots. He laughed at the whole hopeless human family. He laughed through a wild wind back to shelter.

The sailor stared after him, tapping his brow. “Fair daft,” he muttered to himself. “A’ them Yanks is daft.”

David Walker



DAVID WALKER was born in Fife, Scotland, in 1911. He went to Shrewsbury School and afterwards to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. In 1931 he joined the Army, serving in the Black Watch in Asia and Africa. In 1938 he became A.D.C. to Lord Tweedsmuir (John Buchan) when the great Scottish author was Governor-General of Canada. In Canada he met the young lady who became his wife.

When war broke out, Walker joined the Highland Division. He was taken prisoner in France in 1940, and spent the rest of the war in German prison camps. He escaped three times, but never reached a frontier. While a prisoner of war he read a great deal, learned German as well as some Spanish and Russian, and developed a passion for music. In April 1945, he was liberated by an American armoured unit.

After the war Walker served as Comptroller to the last two British Viceroy of India. In 1947 he retired from the Army. A year later the Walkers returned to Canada, and settled in St. Andrews, New Brunswick. They now have four sons.

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